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House of the Three Ganders

Irving Bacheller

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The reader of this book will speedily recognize that there is at work here more than the ingenuity of the good story teller. There will be justice in the conclusion, for the author of *Eben Holden* has taken as a basis for the plot a trial famous in the legal annals of New York state. The amazing developments that stirred the tranquil little village of Amity Dam have rarely been matched as a proof of the adage about fact and fiction.

But transcending the sheer fascination of the plot itself is the rich and poignant humanity of the story. Old Bumpy Brown with his wooden leg hollowed out to hold liquid fire for cheer on his journeys, and Shad Morryson, his young friend who inherits Bonaparte blood from a great-great-grandmother are the principal characters, but many others are drawn in to activate a moving drama of a humble man's fight for his life against bewildering odds. The woodsy setting, the quaint customs and highly humorous sayings of the countryside, the unconscious nobility of its steadfast people, all blend to make the distinctive flavor of a true Bacheller novel.

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THE HOUSE OF THE THREE GANDERS

BY IRVING BACHELLER

EBEN HOLDEN
D'RI AND I
DARREL OF THE BLESSED ISLES
THE LIGHT IN THE CLEARING
KEEPING UP WITH WILLIAM
A MAN FOR THE AGES
THE PRODIGAL VILLAGE
FATHER ABRAHAM
IN THE DAYS OF POOR RICHARD
OPINIONS OF A CHEERFUL YANKEE
COMING UP THE ROAD

The House
of the
Three Ganders

By

IRVING BACHELLER

COLLEGE OF ST. THOMAS ST. PAUL, MINN.

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FOREWORD

The author is indebted to the masterly brief of his friend, the late Judge Ledyard P. Hale, for the irrefragable chain of evidence that came of his deductions and discoveries in a celebrated case of the north country. That chain is the backbone of this narrative, the body of which has a structure of its own, differing in important details from that of the true story.

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THE HOUSE OF THE THREE GANDERS

THE HOUSE *of* THE THREE GANDERS

CHAPTER I

THE FUGITIVE AND THE POCKET EYE

THAT dam on the Racquette so increased the prosperity and size of the small settlements on either shore of the river that a bridge became necessary. It was built. The two communities separated by flowing water had long been at war with each other. The bridge drew them together into one village. Their petty jealousies vanished. It was unregenerate Colonel Spenlow, the miller and local Republican boss, who gave the new place its truthful and euphonious name. He called it Amity Dam, thus visiting on its inhabitants a certain curious penalty for the sins of their fathers. They were soon known as Amity Dammers. They protested.

"Would you hide the facts of history?" the

colonel was wont to ask of all objectors. "If any man feels too good for this here town, he'd better reform and go somewhere else."

Long after that the little village was the home of a far-famed mystery out of which came a murderer convicted in the face of unexampled difficulties and against the testimony of three eye-witnesses. It was, moreover, for a time the home of a number of remarkable characters related to the mystery. One of them was the boy Shad Morryson whose courage and shrewd intuition served the state and put him on the road to fortune.

Shad was discovered on a bright June day in 1896. He lay asleep on a bed of moss under a group of pine-trees on the east bank of the upper Oswegatchie. Two fishermen who had come ashore for luncheon found him. Nobody knew exactly when he was born—a matter of slight importance. Shad's life began the day he was discovered. It is likely that he had been eating and drinking a little more than sixteen years. Probably not half the people in this world are alive. They long for something—they know not what. It is life.

The fishermen came upon him suddenly. He lay sprawled on his back with an ancient, long-barreled, muzzle-loading shotgun at his side. He was a

pale thin lad in ragged clothing. Both big toes protruded from holes in his boots. The fishermen aroused him. He sat up and rubbed his eyes and stared in confusion at the strangers looking down at him. The odor of frying bacon came to his nostrils. The sun was shining. The day was warm. Kindly faces were before him.

"I guess I must be dead," he whispered.

They saw to the heart of the boy when he asked from the lifting cloud of his slumber:

"Is God here?"

One of the men put his hand on the boy's shoulder and gave him a gentle shake as he said:

"Wake up, young man. You're still dreaming. You're not dead yet. Come. Lunch is 'most ready."

Still it was a fact that the old Shad Morryson, known to a few people in the forest township of Blair, was dead, that the water at his feet was in effect the River Jordan. Moreover, it would seem that God was really there.

"Well, I kind o' expected to be dead when I woke up," said the boy as he arose. "If I ain't, I'm glad of it. This don't look like the same place where I laid down in the dark an' cold. I heard 'em sing over to Sunday-school, 'bout wantin' to be an angel, but I don't. I want to live."

What a pitiful look of drooping discouragement and supplication was in the figure of the lad as he arose!

"What's the matter? Are ye lost?" one of the strangers asked.

"Run away from home."

"What's your name and where do you live?"

"Don't dast tell ye."

"Are you hungry?"

"Starvin'. Ain't had nothin' to eat for days but one pa'tridge an' a chipmuck."

"Well, you're in luck! Here's sandwiches and bacon and eggs and fish. The fish are frying."

As he spoke the fisherman was undoing packages of food from the pack basket.

The boy trembled with eagerness as he saw it. His face quivered.

"Oh, mister, can I have a sandwich now?" he asked.

"You bet. Take two."

The boy devoured them. He ate like a hungry dog just returned from the chase.

"If I were you, I'd eat slower. If you are not careful now you'll founder yourself. Stop where you are and don't eat any more for ten minutes. Give your gizzard a chance."

"I feel better already," said the boy. "I'll go an' wash. I'm dirty. I ain't fit to eat with nobody, not even myself."

He hurriedly undressed on the river bank. The fishermen observed that the back of his shirt was slashed and bloody, the skin of his back ridged, red and swollen. There were three scabbed cuts across his shoulders.

"My God, boy! What has happened to your back?" one of the men inquired.

"Does it look bad?" the boy asked.

"Bad! I should think that some one had used it for a chopping block."

"Well, they did. My dad gits mad awful easy when he's drunk. He ain't always so mean. I guess I'm purty mean myself. I don't take no interest in the work. What's the use? It don't do no good. He got home an' ketched me fishin' when I should 'a' been hoein' potaters. If I'd 'a' got a good mess of trout he wouldn't 'a' cared, but I didn't."

Shad swam around a moment, came out of the water, dressed himself hurriedly and sat down with his new friends. They were afraid he would eat too much and compelled him to stop before his appetite was appeased.

"I want to pay ye for what I et," said the boy.

"How can you pay us for all that food?"

"I guess I can pay ye. I've got five dollars."

"Five dollars!" one of the men exclaimed in mock seriousness.

"Yes, sir. I earned it workin' out. It was hid in the clock. I stole it when I run away."

"We don't want your money, but we rather like your company."

"I ain't got nothin' else but a top an' some brass wheels that come out of an old clock, an' four lead bullets, an' three fish-hooks stuck in a cork, an' a glass eye that my uncle give me the day he died. If you've got a boy maybe he'd like some o' these things."

Shad took the trinkets out of his trousers pocket as he spoke, with a fond look at them.

The men laughed, saying: "No, we only want to get better acquainted with you. You must come to our camp with us. Perhaps we can help you."

That night he went with the fishermen to their camp at High Falls. Three days later the party moved to Lost Lake where they put up in the log cabin camp of the famous guide, Philo Scott, familiarly known as Phide. It was a long journey through the woods.

Now, one of these sportsmen was slim and a bit undersized. He gave the boy a respectable suit of clothes and shoes and stockings, a cap, a flannel shirt, with collar attached, and a necktie. All these fitted fairly well. Shad came out of the camp in which his benefactor was lodging a new human being, his face clean, his hair trimmed and combed and brushed. Those who saw him were astonished.

"Jiminy Christmas!" one of them exclaimed. "I didn't know you were so handsome. The rags, the dejection, the scared look, the shadow of death are gone. You stand straighter."

Shad was, indeed, well put up, as they used to say in the north country. In spite of his leanness and lankness he was now good to look on. The shapely outlines of his head and face were pleasing. His nose and mouth were especially well cut and sensitive. His hair was rather dark and wavy, his eyes of a like hue were large. The expression of his face was cheerful. He was like a scrawny, ill-fed colt of a promising size and pattern.

The boy took the glass eye from his pocket and held it in the light of the lamp and looked at it.

"My uncle was an awful good man," said Shad. "He told me that this eye would help me to remember that God is a watchin' of me. It's a smart ol'

eye. It can see a long ways ahead an' it can tell when good luck is comin'."

Phide Scott blew his whistle. Supper was ready. The sportsmen and their guest went into the dining camp, a flimsy frame structure covered with the jackets of spruce trees and lined with white birch-bark. They sat on rude benches by a long table spread for supper. The old guide came in with a platter of fried bacon and a plate of griddle-cakes steaming hot.

"Mr. Scott, this is a boy we found asleep on the shore of the river," said one of the fishermen. "We've dressed him up a little and now we're going to feed him up. He was about starved."

The old guide shook the boy's hand and asked:

"Be you Bat Morryson's boy that's run away?"

Shad was frightened by this unexpected query. His face changed color. He shook his head and stammered:

"If—if I was I—I'd be 'shamed to tell ye."

"His boy has stole some money an' run away," the guide went on. "I was over to Wanakeny to-day an' Bat was there. He's run on the tracks o' the boy an' is searchin' the woods. Says the runaway is out in this section somewheres. Bat'll be comin' through here in the mornin'."

Then one of the fishermen let go as follows:

"We don't know whom this boy belongs to. If it's Bat Morryson, I want to tell you that Bat can't have him any more. I'd as soon trust a boy in a cage with a tiger. If Bat comes here, he'll git a piece o' my mind."

"Bat Morryson is a tough ol' wildcat of a man," said the guide. "Had a good womern an' broke her heart. Died years ago. He's drunk half the time. Don't git into no fight with him. He bites like a dog. He'd just as soon take an ear off ye as not."

"I know how to handle that kind of a cur," said the sport, a big powerful man. "Don't worry. If he comes around here he's got to step careful."

After supper these gentlemen took the boy to their sleeping camp. One of them cut off a piece of an old moth-eaten buffalo robe that lay on the floor. He trimmed and shaped it neatly with a pair of scissors. Soon he took the measure of Shad's upper lip.

"I'm making a mustache for you," the man said. "I see you've got a little fuzz on your lip now. Go to the wash basin and lather and shave your lip."

The boy did as he was told. Some liquid glue was applied to the skin side of the mustache. Soon it was fast to Shad's lip. It made a surprising change in the look of the lad.

"Nobody would know you," said one of the men. "It's put ten years on your head. We have a plan for you. Remember you're a man now. You will get a good rest to-night and a good breakfast in the morning. Then you'll take the trail to Bog Lake. My camp is there. I'll give you a note to the guide in charge. He will show you across country to the railroad. Keep on your mustache until you get a hundred miles from here. If you should meet your father, he wouldn't know you. We're going to stake you with twenty dollars. Take a train going west for some point beyond the woods. You'll get a job somewhere. I hope you'll make your fortune. Here is my card. Write me now and then and let me know how you're getting along."

The card bore the name and address of the steel magnate:

Edmund C. Converse,
17 Wall Street, N. Y.

Shad put the money and card in his trousers pocket with great care.

"I'm much obleeged," he said. "I'm kind o' scairt to have so much money. Hope I don't git robbed."

"Don't show it to anybody or let anybody know

that you've got it. Keep your small money in one pocket an' your big money in the other, and don't have much to say to strangers."

"Guess I look a lot better'n I am," said the boy as he surveyed his new garments. "I don't know much. I ain't never been out o' Blair 'cept to go in the woods but onct. Then I went to Carthage to the circus an' was most scairt to death. How does anybody stop at a hotel? Do ye jus' go in an' ask 'em to give ye some victuals?"

The men laughed. This kind of a human being was new to them.

"First find your hotel," said the millionaire. "Then tell the clerk that you want a small room and meals and don't let them charge you more than three dollars a day. Can you read and write?"

"Oh, yes, sir. I can read an' write good. Three winters I've hoofed her four miles to school an' back every day. The teacher give me a new pair o' boots las' Chris'mus time. He walked part way home with me nights an' told me 'bout the moon an' the stars an' the world an' the millions an' millions o' folks. Guess I seen 'em all in Carthage. I don't know much, but I can learn. My brain is kind o' hungry an' when it grabs hold of anything it hangs on."

The boy's heart was full, and these friendly interested men encouraged him to open it. Their faces were like the sunlight of the spring to the cold sod.

They were interrupted by Phide Scott who entered, closing the door behind him. He spoke in a whisper.

"Bat Morryson is over to the cook house. Just come in with a lantern from Dead Creek Floe."

Mr. Converse turned to the boy and said:

"You sit right over there out of the light and don't say a word whatever happens. You needn't be scared. I'm going to take care of you."

Turning to the guide he added: "I want to hire your camp for twenty-four hours. I'll give you a dollar an hour for that period. I want to be the boss here for just twenty-four hours. What do you say?"

"It's a bargain," Scott answered.

"Well, here's your money. It's an oral lease in the presence of these witnesses."

The millionaire took a roll of bills from his pocket, counted out the sum agreed upon and put it into the hands of the famous guide.

"Now, what has Morryson got to say?" Converse asked.

"He wants to spend the night here."

"Tell him you've rented the camp an' he'll have to see me."

"Shall I bring him here?"

"Bring him here but say nothing about the boy."

The guide vanished, returning presently with Bat Morryson—a hairy, powerful Cyclops of the foot-hills. He wore a dirty red-flannel shirt. His ragged trousers were hooked over each inside ear of his boots. His one eye was red, his face flushed. He had been drinking but was not drunk.

"What do you want?" Converse asked bluntly.

The newcomer shifted his quid, spat into the fireplace and wiped his bristling mustache with the back of his hand.

"I'm looking' for my boy Shad who run away an' is somewhere in this part o' the woods."

Converse stopped him.

"Why did he run away? Couldn't you make him happy at home?"

"I tried to."

"No, you didn't. I know all about you. You abused his mother. When she died you married a strumpet who abuses your children. You go off and get drunk and spend about all you can earn while Shad plants and hoes the potatoes and corn. You come home and get mad and beat him until his

back bleeds. I'd rather be a yellow dog with a hairy hide and a talent for eating bones than your son. I saw the lad. He was a mile or so below High Falls on the river bank. I saw his wounds, too. Damn you, Bat Morryson, you care for nothing but that greedy, dirty, hog's belly of yours!"

Bat Morryson sat leaning forward on his elbows, looking at the man who thus addressed him, his brow deeply furrowed. His attitude was that of a great cat ready to spring. He knew that he was in the presence of his master. What he had heard was, in a sense, news to that tough old lumberjack and river driver. No one had ever talked to him like that. No one had ever dared to. He showed no anger, no sign of resentment. Was it because he saw the gleam of truth in the words spoken, or the gleam of the long-barreled pistol in the millionaire's belt, or the gleam of the three pairs of unfriendly eyes that were looking at him?

He rose from his chair with a serious look on his face. He turned to the old guide, saying:

"Give me a bite to eat an' I'll go to bed."

"Not here," said Converse. "Not on your life. This is my camp. I don't want you anywhere near me. You pike off and take your chances just as the boy has done. There's a camp at High Falls.

It will do you good to take a walk and do some thinking before you go to bed. You've got a lantern."

"That's fifteen mile from here, an' it looks like rain," the ruffian muttered.

"Good! I wish it was twenty and that it would rain hard enough to wash your dirty soul. For once in your life you're going to do some work. If you're hungry you'll get a little plain bread and water."

Bat had no desire for bread and water. Without a word he picked up his lantern outside the door and strode off into the darkness. He went not in the direction of High Falls but back on the trail toward Dead Creek Floe. When he was perhaps fifty yards away he turned and shouted angrily:

"The hull pack o' ye can go to hell. If I git hold o' that boy I'll break his back an' it ain't none o' your damn' business."

He was like a wounded panther growling with rage as he resumed his journey—a veritable child of the darkness in which he walked.

The campers watched the flicker of his light until it was lost in the thickets.

"I have never seen a meaner type of man," said Converse. "If he got drunk and came back here he'd try to cut our throats."

"Oh, he won't be comin' back here," Scott declared. "There's a lumber camp down by Grass Pond. He'll head fer that. He ain't goin' to give up lookin' fer the boy. He wants to get him back. He mistrusts that the runaway is here. Bat needs him. The boy could earn many a bottle o' whisky for him this summer."

Bat had not recognized his son. The ragged unkempt lad was not there. Shad went to bed that night with a deep pity in his heart for the man who was his father, remembering as he did the good days past—of which there were some like starlight in his dark memories. Soon he slept, as only a weary boy can sleep. He awoke refreshed in the morning.

"I'm glad it ain't yesterday no more," he said to Mr. Converse as he was dressing. "I feel better—more like a man."

"You look like a gentleman, and I want you to learn to eat as gentlemen do. Eat slowly and keep your knife away from your face. Use it only to cut your food, and eat with your fork. When you get to a town buy a tooth-brush and use it after every meal. You have handsome teeth."

"I won't forget your advice," said the boy. "I'd like to be a gentleman."

They went to breakfast.

Phide Scott entered the dining-room with the familiar platter of trout and bacon and a discouraged look on his face.

"Uncle Phide, what's the matter?" one of the fishermen asked.

"Jest lost a bran'-new set o' false teeth," said the guide.

"How did that happen?"

"I was out on the lake fishin' 'bout an hour ago an' I fetched a sneeze. I orto have knowed enough to give a suck when I felt the sneeze comin', but I didn't have time. It's the second set o' teeth that's gone in that damn' lake. I've sneezed myself poor. If I had a million dollars it wouldn't bother me to sneeze 'em away, not a bit."

Every one burst into laughter over this droll depression of the old guide. Shad laughed as heartily as the men.

Mr. Converse turned to the lad saying: "I like your face better than ever when you laugh. I'm going to give you five dollars more for that laugh. I want you to know that a smiling face pays. Keep thinking of the champion sneezer of the Adirondacks, and your face will win out. I'll send Uncle Phide down the trail with you to my camp. He'll keep you happy till you're beyond the danger point.

Uncle Phide, you take a gun with you and see that he gets there and don't let him stop smiling."

"Don't worry. I'll keep his face busy," said the old guide.

When Scott and the boy were ready to set out, the latter in his new clothes and mustache, Mr. Converse said to him: "Have you got your money?"

"Yes, sir, I've got it pinned in my pocket all safe."

"When you get out of the woods, make for St. Lawrence County. It's near Canada. You could jump across the border if necessary and be safe. Take this letter to my friend Colonel Blake. He lives in Canton."

Then Shad and the famous guide began their journey through that winding green aisle in the deep woods from Big Deer Pond to Mud Lake. Soon the boy said to the guide:

"If we meet anybody, I'll pretend to be deef an' dumb. I'll make motions to you like that."

He imitated the signs used by the dumb and went on: "There's a dumb feller down in our country. I've seen him talk with his hands. You do what I do as nigh as ye can."

"I guess you'll wade through any mud-hole in yer way," said Scott. "You're as smart as a fox."

It was lucky that the boy had had his say, for in a moment Phide's tongue began its day-long, devious course. Once started, it went on like a clock even when there was no one to listen. They had gone about a mile when, at a point where the trail sloped down a hillside, the guide stopped suddenly.

"Some one jest crossed the trail away down yender in the valley," he whispered. The guide stood still, looking intently at the point where a moving figure had attracted his attention.

Again he whispered: "It's a man. He's settin' on a log by the side o' the trail. He doesn't see us. Come on. If it's yer father I may stop a minute, but you walk right on as if ye'd never seen him before. He wouldn't know ye from a side o' sole leather."

Within five minutes they came upon Bat Morryson sitting at the trail-side. The boy, walking ahead, had assumed a slight limp to disguise his gait.

Bat greeted him saying: "Hello, stranger."

Shad made no reply.

"He's deef an' dumb, an' ye might as well talk to that log yer settin' on," said Phide Scott as he stopped by the huge Cyclopean Bat.

The boy passed on around a turn in the trail and in a moment was beyond the reach of their vision. In a short time the guide overtook him.

"He mistrusts that you're back at my camp," said Scott. "He's heard at Grass Pond that Converse is over with me. He's made up his mind that the millionaire will try to slip you across to his place at Bog Lake."

A mile or so farther on the two came to that big black pond known as Mud Lake. They got into the only boat at the landing and rowed across. The most beautiful trail in the wilderness lay before them, leading through rock glens and bordered here and there by moose-wood thickets and maiden-hair ferns knee-deep and thick as grass in a meadow. It was now a two-mile stretch to Bog Lake walled in by giant pines and spruces.

Meanwhile the slow intellect of Bat Morryson, sitting on a log by the trail-side, had begun to find its way. He had been thinking about the small stranger who had come down the trail with Phide Scott. There was something familiar in the look of that chap.

Suddenly he arose. "By God! They've fooled me," he said to himself. "They've dressed the boy up an' put a piece o' fur on his lip an' slipped him right under my nose."

He hurried down the trail in pursuit of Scott and Shad, not half a mile behind them. He was

losing a slave, and the slave was of considerable value. To be just to him, that was not the only motive in Bat's mind. His threat to break the boy's back if he found him was born of a moment's anger. He was sober now. He knew that he had treated Shad cruelly. It is not to be doubted that he was suffering for that. He felt that he must get him back and make peace with him and show him that he was not a brute. He did not realize how temporary were his best moods, that the brute was only sleeping and would soon awake. When he got to Mud Lake and found no boat and saw the others landing a mile away on the far shore, the brute was awake and growling. He started to skirt the lake, with his mouth full of curses, and was soon wallowing in the mire of a swamp. Then again, he would have broken the boy's back. Bat had with him always a bottle of passions and could lose his sobriety in a minute. He had two hours of hard travel before he found the boat landing on the south side of Mud Lake. As he set out for Bog Lake, wet and weary, the panther was lashing his tail.

CHAPTER II

THE FUGITIVE OVERTAKEN RESORTS TO STRATEGY

SOON after Shad arrived at the big log camp of Mr. Converse, he and his guide crossed Bog Lake and set out for the railroad. A freight and accommodation train was waiting at a flag station. Shad got aboard and went on to Fulton Chain. He was advised to change there to the express train bound for Utica. This he did.

It was the fourth of July. There had been a celebration of the day in the forest village. A number of boys and girls, out of the procession of terribles, were at the station in masks and gay-colored muslin capes. They had come up to the celebration from stations below and now, late in the day, were returning to their homes. Shad stood in the midst of this merry throng when the express train arrived. After the engine had passed he saw the head of his father protruding from a window of the smoking-

car. The man was looking intently at the crowded platform. The boy ducked downward as if looking for something he had dropped. He climbed aboard a car near him wondering whether he had better take that train or wait for another. Perhaps his father would get off there. He had to decide quickly. A good idea came to him. He bargained with a boy at his side for the latter's mask and cape. In a moment the cape was around Shad's shoulders, the mask on his face. He sat down with a band of disguised merrymakers. He had now a well-founded sense of security. He took the glass eye from his pocket and surveyed it for a moment. It had the right look. He quickly put it away.

A happy lot of boys and girls sat around him, blowing tin horns, laughing, throwing jests and missiles at one another. He had never known that boys and girls could be so happy. Soon he was catching and throwing the missiles as if he were really one of them. A little after the train started Bat Morryson came through the car looking for his son. He had reached the railroad somehow and boarded the train, two hours late, at a station far above. He went to the end of the train and back, his big red eye searching in vain for the boy slave.

Shad got out with a large band of merrymakers

at Remsen. Suddenly he discovered that his father was walking just ahead of him with a stranger.

"If I don't find the young devil here, I'll buy a bottle o' whisky an' put fer home," he was saying. "I've had enough o' this."

Shad left them at the next corner and went straight out into the country. He was soon beyond the village on a dirt road. The glowing west, wherein the sun had lately set, was at his left. He knew, therefore, that he was going north. Darkness fell but he kept on. It was a lonely road.

After some hours of travel he came to a new-mown meadow by the roadside where dried hay was cocked or in windrows. He crossed the fence, tore open a cock of hay and made for himself a comfortable bed of the sweet-odored grasses and lay down upon it and fell asleep.

He was up at daylight. With his cape and mask in a bundle under his arm, he took to the road again. In walking he showed a deep respect for his superstitions. In an open road he was always careful not to step on a shadow and was often at great pains to avoid this peril. If a grasshopper lighted on him, he thought it necessary to keep his fingers crossed for a hundred paces. If a butterfly came down upon his head, it was good luck.

About midday he came to a little village where were a railroad station and a small hotel. At the latter he got his dinner. Then he studied a map which hung on its office wall. Never before had he felt such an interest in geography. Late that afternoon he got a train going north. He had to wait some hours at a railroad junction where he slept on a seat in the depot until, just before daylight, the train caller awoke him. He got aboard the night express and arrived at Canton about six in the morning. A bus driver told him how to reach the house of Colonel Blake two miles from town.

He set out in the direction indicated and was soon beyond the village up toward the hills. He came to a little red house with flowers in the door-yard and potted plants in the windows. A small, mounted brass cannon stood on one side of the lawn. In the road a man and his dog were driving some cattle.

"I'm lookin' for Colonel Blake's house," said the boy.

"I wouldn't wonder if you were also lookin' for some breakfast," the man answered.

"I am kind o' hungry."

"Well, hunger is like every other good thing. It can be carried too far. You can let go of it as soon

as I have put out these cattle. I'm hungry myself. I ain't been so hungry since my grandmother had red hair."

"I'm awful hungry," said the boy. "I've got money to pay for what I eat."

"Look here, did you see that cannon in my yard?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I shoot it at every man that offers me money for victuals after he's warned. If you've got more money than you want, you can throw some of it into my well."

Shad looked at the man who was dressed in the faded soiled garments of a hard-working farmer. He was tall and lean. He wore a small red mustache. The old felt, cocked hat on his head had a shapeless, comic shabbiness.

"Ye see I'm proud," the man added. "I ain't seen it lately but I wouldn't wonder if my blood had turned blue."

"Blue?" Shad asked. He had never heard of such a thing.

"Blue as a whetstone. Any man's blood is likely to turn blue when he begins to select his ancestors."

The cattle began streaming through an open barway into the pasture. When all were entered and the bars put up the man turned to the boy and said

"Now follow me. We'll tend to Colonel Blake later."

Shad was smiling. He had never seen a man so curious.

The sun was up. A clear, beautiful summer day had begun. They washed with soap and cold water dipped from a rain barrel at a stand outside the door, and went into the house and sat down at the breakfast table. Shad observed that the walls of the house were decorated with antlered heads, bows and arrows, and other trophies of the hunt. He looked at them with deep interest.

"Where did they come from?" the boy asked.

"Oh, I've been quite a killer," the man answered. "Years ago I fought Indians a while, an' when I got tired of killin' red men I began on the animal kingdom. It used to be an honor to see me an' live."

They ate in silence for a moment, the hired girl bringing their food from a stove.

"Look here, pard," said the man. "I'll tell you my name if you'll tell me yours. Names are not important, but in high society they're a help."

"My name is Shad Morryson," said the boy.

"It's quite a mouthful. My name is Alson Blake."

"Be you Colonel Blake?"

"Yes. That's what they call me."

"Here's a letter for you."

Shad drew the letter from his pocket and put it in the colonel's hands. The latter opened and read it.

"Converse! He and I have had some sanguinary adventures. He knows a good thing when he sees it, and I guess he'd know a good boy."

Shad looked at his host whose kindly face and droll way of talking impressed him.

"I never saw a colonel before," he remarked.

"Well, these days they're a harmless lot. Around here there's colonels an' a major an' one general an' more A. M.'s an' D. D.'s an' LL. D.'s than you could shake a stick at. We've got one man who's an A. Y. U."

"What does A. Y. U. mean?"

"As yet unhung. It's an ol' feller that ain't stopped talkin' since he was born. Talks right on even when he's asleep. Comes an' calls me out of bed nights to tell me of something he'd forgot to tell before. You must 'a' noticed that I look kind o' sickly. That's the reason."

Alson Blake laughed good-naturedly. Shad was smiling.

"We live in hopes," Mr. Blake went on. "That cannon will get shot off the day he dies an' there'll

be fireworks in the evenin'. Right under his name on the tombstone we'll put the words 'Enough said.' "

Shad laughed merrily.

"Laugh number one!" Colonel Blake exclaimed with some enthusiasm. "You were lookin' purty solemn a few minutes ago."

Blake's wife and daughter entered the room with a cheery greeting, and sat down at the table.

"Here's a boy come up the road this mornin'," the colonel said to his wife. "I hope he's as fond of ladies as he is of flapjacks."

Mrs. Blake was a kindly comely woman about forty years of age. The blonde, blue-eyed girl was dressed for school.

"This girl Ruth is our Professor of Fun," said the man.

Shad was blushing. He and the girl had taken a quick survey of each other and come to conclusions. The young have a special gift for that. Shad thought that next to a spotted fawn she was the most beautiful creature he had ever seen. When he looked at her it was to discover that she was looking at him. The same was true of the girl. Colonel Blake saw it all and smiled.

Shad declined to eat more flapjacks.

"What's your record?" the man asked.

"Fourteen."

The colonel turned to his wife and said: "Shoot off the cannon. I'm going to hitch up an' take him away from here."

In a moment he added: "We'll go down to the office. I'll give you a letter to a friend of mine over at Amity Dam who told me that he wanted a boy to work in his store."

The colonel and the lad went out-of-doors. It was the tender-hearted, impressionable Mrs. Blake who made all this a part of our history. She called to her husband. He returned to the house.

"Who is that beautiful boy and where did he come from?" the woman asked.

"He's a runaway—a kind of a fugitive slave. Converse tells me that his father is a brutal Simon Legree who lives somewhere across the woods. This boy has been an abject beaten slave."

"What a shame! His smiling handsome face has won my heart. Let's keep him here a day or two and give him a chance to rest."

"We'll ask him. I rather guess he'd like it."

So it came about that the boy tarried a day and a night at the red farmhouse. A new experience had come to Shad. Women had been mostly hateful to him. They had been hard to get along with. He

had had a poor opinion of them. The girls he had known were rough, coarse and quarrelsome. He felt something immeasurably grateful and wonderful in the motherly, gentle manner of Mrs. Blake and in the beauty and grace of her daughter.

Ruth did not go to school that day. She entertained the boy with the photograph album and the Indian relics and with croquet and throwing and catching a ball. They were pleased with all this, but their joy came from a different source; perhaps from looking into each other's eyes and from a singular emotion quite new to them.

At last they sat down very tired in the swing under the big maple tree. "Where is Colonel Blake?" the boy asked.

"Oh, he's gone to town. He's a lawyer. He's the district attorney," the girl answered proudly. "He goes away every morning. Are you going with him to-morrow?"

"Yes, I must get to work."

"Men are so hateful. They're always going to work."

Her hair was like spun gold, her eyes were as blue as violets, her voice was as musical and care free as the song sparrow's. They were in that wistful stage of joyous, mutual discovery. The boy had found in

her eyes a something which he could not forget.

She was wiser than he for he knew nothing of that mysterious power in the eyes and form and graceful movements of a maiden which had produced the singular emotion now in his breast. Yet he had the soul of a poet, its love of beauty and its quick perception. She looked at his glass eye.

"It's a smart ol' eye. Ye toss it up in the woods an' it'll tell ye which way to go."

"It will?"

"Didn't it bring me to the shore o' the river where them hunters found me?"

He tossed it and when he picked it out of the grass it was looking straight upward at the sky.

"It's a fool eye now. I feel like a fish that's been throwed in the air with a hook in his mouth an' has gone under the bank to think it over."

She laughed, saying: "You talk so funny."

"Well, I'm kind o' scairt. I don't know how to talk any other way. But I'm quick to learn. Tell me 'bout yer school. What do ye do there?"

She told him of the school and her studies.

"Oh-h!" he answered wistfully. "I'd like to go to school like that an' learn to talk good like you an' wear shiny shoes an' nice clothes. I want to be a gentleman like yer father and Mr. Converse."

She looked into his eyes, saying: "You are an interesting boy. I never saw any one like you."

"I'd just like to stay here," he said. "If I had a thousand dollars I'd give it to you."

"What for?"

"I dunno. I'd just like to. That's the way I feel. I'm not exactly sure how it feels to be happy. I wouldn't wonder if I had got it."

This curious variety of love-making filled the most delightful day that Shad had known. That evening Colonel Blake returned. He was dressed like a gentleman. After supper as they sat by the evening lamp the colonel told of his adventures in the wild West hunting Apaches and grizzly bears, and how, after graduating from a law school, he had returned to the village in which he was born.

In the morning when the boy stood with Colonel Blake by the buggy which was to take them to town, Ruth called to him from the door. He went to her.

"Will you write me a letter?" she asked.

He promised to do so. She shook his hand and ran away into the house. She did not even say good-by.

Shad returned to the buggy blushing and smiling; his blood was flowing fast. The colonel laughed. Mrs. Blake kissed her husband and the lad.

"They'll watch you in that store," she said. "Of course you'll work hard and be strictly honest. We love you and we want you to succeed."

Those were the best words that Shad Morryson had ever heard. He did not forget them. The first timber in the real structure of his life had found its place. Now for the first time happiness had come to him. He was no longer a lonely, discouraged, life-sick lad. He took with him as he went away a memory that was like a beloved companion. He was at last fully alive.

In town the colonel bought for Shad a supply of shirts, socks and underclothing and neckwear.

The Blakes had much to say of a singular charm in the personality of the lad who had thus come to them. The colonel's inquiries soon led to the discovery of an interesting fact. The boy's mother was said to be a great, great granddaughter of that brother of Napoleon Bonaparte who, late in the eighteenth century, had had a hunting lodge in northern New York and who for a time had occupied the throne of Spain. It helped to explain the mental keenness of the boy and the noble shape of his head and the beauty of his countenance.

CHAPTER III

SHAD GOES TO WORK AND MEETS OLD BUMPY BROWN

IN HIS office Colonel Blake was not at all like the man Shad had met at the farmhouse. He was dignified. He used no unnecessary words when he was drawing pay for them. There was a fine amenity in his manner. The rude Yankee dialect which he had used on the farm was dropped when he entered the office. Now and then he indulged in playful remarks. His clients often quoted them. They were made in a quiet tone. Business was mostly a serious matter with him. In his view the farm was a joke, and there he played. A part of his play was the rude dialect of the countryside.

Many people were waiting to confer with him. The district attorney was widely known. He was the terror of evil-doers. They used to say of him that he could look through the face of a man and see what was going on in his mind. He took Shad to

the inner office, and, calling a stenographer to his desk, dictated a letter of introduction for the boy to Mr. Ephraim Smithers of Amity Dam. When the letter was typed and signed he put it in Shad's hands, saying:

"Take a train to Ashfield at eleven. When you get there inquire your way to Amity Dam. It will be a five-mile walk for you. Have you money?"

"I've got twenty-one dollars in my pocket," was the proud answer of the boy. "Mr. Converse give it to me."

"Keep it a secret and hang on to it. Good-by."

The boy had almost two hours to spend before train-time. He walked around the village, to him a wonderful place, with its town hall and houses and stores that looked large and important. He had never written a letter. He had seen only three or four letters in all his life.

"I don't know how I'd go to work to write a letter," he said to himself, "I'm too ignorant. I've got to learn something. I've got to."

The store windows interested him. He was a little afraid of the many people in the streets. He kept a hand in the pocket where his loose money was, to make sure that nobody stole it. It is significant that he should have stopped longest in front of a

book store gazing wistfully at a lot of books. The merchant observed him and came out with the familiar query:

"Is there anything we can do for you?"

"I want to learn a lot o' words I don't know."

Soon he had bought a pocket dictionary, a small diary, a lead pencil and a cheap watch. With these treasures he went to the station and began at once, while he was waiting, to study the dictionary. He arrived at Ashfield and learned his way to Amity Dam. The day was far spent. He hurried, reaching the small village on the shore of the Racquette River in the early dusk. Mr. Smithers read the colonel's letter. He was a bearded solemn-looking man of middle age with a gentle voice that softened the price of dry goods and won the confidence of women.

"I'll give you a trial," he said. "Ten dollars a month and board is all I can pay you."

Shad agreed to these terms.

"Sit down here and rest yourself," said the Merchant Prince of Amity Dam. "We'll go home about nine o'clock."

Mr. Ephraim Smithers was a quiet hard-working man. His clothes were of a dark gray material. His hair, beard and manners were of the same color.

He went to church every Sunday perfumed like a milliner. After Shad rested a while, Mr. Smithers showed the boy his establishment from cellar to garret. It was the usual country store of that time, with counters and show-cases on either side, a post-office in the rear, a kerosene tank in the cellar, and stoves, pumps and farming implements in the loft. Mr. Smithers wrote out for the boy a list of his many duties. Before they went home the merchant gave Shad a lesson in wrapping packages.

Mr. Smithers lived in a frame house near the store. His wife was a kindly gray-haired woman who wore spectacles. With a candle in her hand, she led the boy to his room above stairs, where she lighted a small lamp and put it on a little table at his bedside. Two books lay on the table. One of them was the story of Toby Tyler. He had learned to read, but he had never read any book save the First and Second Readers. They had given him pious paper-covered books to read at the mission Sunday-school; he tried to read them but the toil was greater than the pleasure. Before he slept he made this entry in his diary:

I love Kurnel Blake an' all his folks. Walked from Ashfield to the store in an hour and 20 minnits.

It was an entry of greater importance than he knew.

He began to read of that other runaway boy, Toby Tyler. There were no big words in the book. It caught and held his interest, and partly because he had seen the characters and color of a circus. He read on and on until near twelve o'clock. It was the first of many delightful evenings in that small room with its sloped ceiling.

The days were filled with joy for the homeless lad. He was quick to learn. He enjoyed his work. The farmer folk interested him. They were mostly a jolly, well-fed, good-natured lot of people.

One day a tall brown-bearded man entered the store. Shad was alone talking with a boy known in the neighborhood as Bony. The man had a serious face and a brusk manner.

"Hurry up, boy, and give me a pound of the best tea," he commanded.

Shad obeyed him and while he was weighing the tea remarked that it was a nice morning.

"Young man, I know that as well as you do. Hurry up! I've got to get along."

He paid for his purchase and hurried out of the store. This stranger was not like any other person Shad had seen in Amity Dam.

"Who is that?" he inquired of Bony.

"That, sir? It's Cyrus Doolittle. We call him 'Cyrus the Great.' He hurries more an' does less than any other man I know of. He's so busy hurryin' he don't have time to do anything else. He's gen'rally flyin' between here an' somewhere behind a pair o' fast hosses. He's a politician. He's the great man of the town."

Bony was a born satirist. A slim hatchet-faced lad with a sense of humor, he worked at odd jobs here and there and often set the village smiling.

"If you want to know more about Cy Doolittle, you ask ol' Bumpy Brown 'bout him."

"Who is Bumpy Brown?" Shad asked.

"He's the best dammer in Amity Dam. Now an' then he takes a holiday an' sets down comf'table an' spends it cussin' Cy Doolittle. Ye'd think he was eatin' candy an' peanuts an' drinkin' lemonade."

This somewhat fanciful introduction being ended, the boy endeavored to restrain his imagination with no great success, while he presented the outstanding facts in Mr. Brown's biography.

"Bumpy is an old feller with a wooden leg who lives 'bout three miles away in the cur'usest shack you ever see. It's on the shore of the river. As a liar he'd take the first premium at the county fair.

Nobody believes him. He's got a spurt o' white whiskers on his chin. Looks like the first six inches o' water that hisses out of a hose-end at high pressure. Them whiskers stick out straight, but they don't hiss only when the wind blows."

"Don't he like Mr. Doolittle?"

"Hates the ground he walks on. He'll start from Piermont sober and, with no help that any one knows of but the scenery, he'll be drunk when he gits here. He never carries a bottle. It's a mystery. He'll set an' lean ag'in' the telephone pole opposite this store an' laugh an' cuss Cy till the cows come home. When he thinks he's ruined Cy enough he'll limp off down the road. He can walk as fast as anybody."

The boys laughed.

"He's the only fun we have," Bony went on. "There's nothin' here but butter an' cheese factories an' whiskers an' hard work. We need a fun factory, an' Bumpy Brown is it."

That day Shad received a package of books from Colonel Blake: school-books and some tales by Oliver Optic. The kindly Mrs. Smithers began to help him evenings with his grammar and arithmetic. He wrote many letters to Ruth Blake. They did not satisfy him. They violated a hidden growing sense of artistic propriety. He studied and burned them.

On a September afternoon he got leave to go with Bony to the fair in Ashfield. They walked to and from that village. They tried most of the offerings of pop and lemonade and peanuts and peaches and bananas. They speared the rings in a merry-go-round. They were hurrying toward a shooting gallery when Shad came face to face with the sister of his stepmother—a young French woman of the name of Ba'tiste, who had come down from a lumber camp in the woods. Shad treated her to lemonade and she promised not to tell any one that she had seen him. On his way home and for days thereafter he thought of this meeting. He knew that the Ba'tistes were a bad lot.

One day Bumpy Brown came out and sat in his accustomed place on the corner at Amity Dam. Shad went out of the store for a look at him. Old Bumpy was in an advanced stage of inebriation. He was muttering, "Rascal!" "Dirty sneak!" and like words of bitter scorn. He sat with the soles of his shabby shoes toward the store. As Shad approached the old man looked at him and nodded with a smile. His face reflected the joy in his heart. He was about sixty years of age.

"Hello, boy!" he said.

Then he drew from his pocket a pack of news-

paper strips cut in bank-bill sizes. He peeled off a number of them as if he were counting money. He gave them to the boy, saying:

"Here's a thousan' dollars. Don't fool it away."

Bumpy Brown was a born philanthropist. It is likely that in this bit of playfulness the dream of his life found a faint but grateful expression. It may be that certain of his ancestors had had lavish hands and well-filled pockets. It should be added that he was not often drunk. Three or four times in a summer he went on a spree and when that happened he came always to Amity Dam. He was then so harmless and quiet that no one interfered with his pleasure.

Shad was deeply interested in the curious man. He had to hurry back to the store. As he left, the drunkard called out laughingly: "And there lay round upon the ground great heaps of so'gers."

Bumpy's assessment of Doolittle did not agree with the sentiment of the countryside. While people thought Doolittle a showy man, not overfond of work, who was deeply indebted to the bounty of his father-in-law, with whom he lived, everybody respected him or seemed to, everybody but Bumpy Brown and the boy Bony Squares. However, Bony was nobody. He came from nowhere. Moreover,

he was down on the whole village. Mr. Doolittle was the friend of every great man in the county. He was a supporter of the church. He spoke at political meetings.

That evening Shad was probably the happiest boy in the county. The mail had brought him a letter from Ruth Blake. Three times he had read it and then had put the treasure very carefully in his pocket. Often he touched it with his fingers. Ruth and her mother and father had invited him to their home. He felt like a person of importance. Looking at the letter had brought back to him the singular elation which had come from looking into her eyes, from the feel of her hand. Shad was getting along. He had better manners. He had studied the grammar and dictionary.

"She's going to see a different kind of a man," he said to himself. "I'll write her a letter that'll make her open her eyes. I'll put every big word I've learnt in it."

He had shaken off his rude dialect. He had not yet learned how difficult it is to shake off the thing called background. History is often like a wolf on the trail of a stag.

Shad and Bony were alone in the store that evening. Suddenly the door opened. Shad's heart

sank within him when he saw his father, Bat Morryson, and the village constable approaching him.

"You damned runaway! At last I've found you!" said Bat. "What are you doing here?"

"Working," Shad answered.

"You're going to come with me, I've got work enough for you at home."

"Is he your father?" the constable asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Then I expect you'll have to go with him."

Bony picked up a pitchfork from a stack of tools.

"I'll get my coat and hat," said Shad as he hurried into the rear room.

Bat started after his son. Bony halted him with the pitchfork saying, "If you go a step further, I'll turn you into hay."

CHAPTER IV

A DAY AT THE FUN SHOP IN BROWN'S COVE

FROM the rear room of the store Shad ran down-stairs to the cellar and out of its open hatchway. He went directly to the Smithers' house. The merchant, now familiar with the history of Shad, was at home. Learning the truth, he said to the boy:

"You disappear until the colonel comes. I'll telephone him. I don't want to know where you are."

He hurried to the store. Shad went to the loft in the barn and spread a blanket on the haymow and lay down.

Mr. Smithers found the Cyclopean Bat swearing mad. Shad's father and the constable were in the store. The latter introduced Mr. Smithers.

"Where is that boy?" Bat asked.

"I don't know."

"You're a damned liar."

"I don't allow swearing in this store," said Mr. Smithers in that gentle tone which he used in selling ribbons to a lady. "If you'll sit down, I'll consult my attorney on the telephone and ask him what ought to be done."

He called Colonel Blake, who said, "Tell the man that I'll meet him at your store to-morrow at eleven o'clock."

The interview next morning was very brief.

"Morryson, I know all about you," said the colonel. "You ought to be in jail. I shall see that you are put there and tried for brutality to your children if you do not get out of this county to-day and stay out of it. You can get a train at Ashfield at one. Don't irritate me by talk or tarrying. I want you to start now."

Bat started. He had heard of the district attorney of St. Lawrence County, the terror of all the lawbreakers of the north country. He would make no words with him. The colonel set out for his home.

At last Shad was free. He celebrated his emancipation with a social adventure. It marks the beginning of the second act of this drama of country life. He and Bony went down to Brown's Cove on the river for a visit with Bumpy Brown.

"It'll be Sunday to-morrow—lord, how I dread it!" said Bony. "The bells an' the yells an' the stillness an' the sleepiness an' helpin' Miss Spenlow pick flowers an' then the walk in the cemetery to the graves of her cruel ancestors. Let's break away an' pike off to Bumpy Brown's. He'll be tickled, and it'll be as good as a circus. I'll paddle down to-day an' tell him we're comin'."

Now Mrs. Smithers was a worker in the church. Shad had sat in the Smithers pew every Sunday with her and her husband. His compliance with their wishes had pleased them. The long prayers and sermons, the singing and incomprehensible shouting had generally given him a pain in the head. To harken to this and look intelligent and respectable was hard work for a boy. Mr. Smithers and most of the elderly men were unequal to it. They slept a part of the time. Shad's sense of rectitude was being slowly undermined by this ordeal. Soon he would be willing to lie to escape it.

That Sunday morning he told Mrs. Smithers that he was going for a walk to see the country and to think up things to write in a letter. He would not come home for dinner.

"I'll pray for you," said the good woman.

At the store he met Bony.

"I suppose that Sister Smithers wanted you to go to the Sob Works?" said Bony.

"The Sob Works!"

"The meetin'-house," Bony explained. Always he called it "The Sob Works."

"Oh, yes."

"Gosh! I slept in the same pew with Mr. Smithers one day. There was sobs an' groans an' yells. It was like a game o' baseball with Nelse Parmeter pitchin'. Once in a while seemed so the ball got lost. The game would quiet down. The heads o' the ol' men would kind o' pitch forward as if their whiskers was gittin' heavy. At the next yell they'd h'ist 'em up to the proper level an' wink their eyes an' look interested. In a minute the whiskers would begin to pull an' sag till them ol' heads had dropped forwards ag'in."

A peal of mocking laughter came from Bony's lips.

"Them Smitherses are so proper that they put calico pants on the legs o' their melodian," he declared.

Shad recalled the fussy drapery on that instrument and laughed.

Bony gave an imitation of Mrs. Smithers playing *The Mocking Bird, with Variations.*

"She's good to me," said Shad, remembering her kindness.

"Well, you're good to them. You do all their dirty work for 'em."

They walked down the river road together. Suddenly Shad stepped sidewise.

"By mighty!" he exclaimed.

"What's the matter?"

"I almost stepped on a blue beetle comin' right toward me."

"What if ye did?"

"That's the foolishest thing anybody could do."

"Why?"

"If you step on a blue beetle comin' toward ye, they say you'll die before the leaves fall. It's bad enough to see 'em."

He took three steps to the left, turned in his tracks and spat over his left shoulder. Bony, a year older than he and of a different temperament, laughed at his superstition of the old time.

"Gosh! I ain't scared o' bad luck," he said. "I'm used to it."

"What does Bumpy Brown do?" Shad asked.

"Kind of a tinker—mends umbrellers an' clocks an' tin pans an' 'most anything. He's got a funny bird that talks."

By and by they left the road, passed through a rickety turnstile in the fence and took a well-trod path that led into a thicket of evergreens. Beyond this on the high bank of the river was the curious little home of old Bumpy Brown. It was built of small logs stranded in his cove when the high water of the spring went down. A few shapely cedar trees stood around it. The lumber company of the village below, in whose mill he had spent a part of his life, had been glad to give him the logs he needed. They gave him also a bee, on a holiday, to help him hew and saw and place them.

Bumpy used to say of his acre on the river shore that it was "God's Fair Ground." A man of imagination going to the lonely little house on a clear June morning would have called it the capital of Fairy-land and chiefly because of the many voices in the reedy marsh and the woods and the flower-strewn grasses near it.

Song sparrows, robins, cat-birds, thrushes, phœbes, winter wrens, red-eyed vireos, meadow larks, black birds, crows, crickets, katydids, peepers, filled the silence of a summer day. These were mostly hidden voices. But the beauty of the scene was quite apparent even to the vulgar eye—the shapely thorn trees and cedars on the grassy slope,

the river view, the irised shore, the dark-green of the graceful marsh-reeds.

Bumpy was wont to call the birds his chickens. He fed them with crumbs from his table. When at home he was often at war with predatory owls and hen-hawks, his shotgun in hand.

With his own hands he had completed the picturesque little house. It was snugged into the river bank. Its curving roof had a wide overhang. Its windows were almost flush with the ground toward the trail. Its floor was somewhat below the level of the ground on three sides. Its south side toward the river had a door and two windows, opening on a flat rock ledge. Beyond them was a fine stretch of still water. The roof was partly covered with overlapping cedar strips from an abandoned launch, a patch of shingles, a patch of rusty tin, and a patch of tar paper.

The windows and doors differed in shape and size. They had come from abandoned mills and houses. The snug and shapely structure, about sixteen feet square, gave one the impression that it had grown out of the ground. Though delightful in form, it was a thing of shreds and patches. Certain features of this unique home betrayed a sense of artistry in its builder. One was a log standing erect

before the door, its lower end sunk in the ground. On this was an old iron bracket from which hung an ancient perforated tin lantern.

Bumpy Brown was cutting wood back of the house. He was now decently dressed.

"Hello, Bony!" he shouted. "I'm gettin' ready to start up the fun works."

"It's a sight to see you workin'," said Bony.

"Say, by Jeedix! When I've swung an ax a while I git a grudge ag'in' Adam fer eatin' that apple."

Bony introduced his young friend.

"Say, boys, what be you expectin'?"

The boys did not quite understand his query and were silent.

"What be you hankerin' for? I can preach ye a sermont if ye say so."

"We've had one already," Bony answered.

"I knew it. Leastways I thought I knew it. I'm glad that's over. I've been preachin' to myself for several days an' I'm ready to knock off an' have some fun. When a man is his own minister his congregation is likely to hear the truth. Boys, when you're as old as I am you'll often hear sermonts without words. By Jeedix! They're apt to be stout and solemn."

Bumpy's gray eyes were full of joy under their long silver tufts. He wiped his bald head and smoothed his energetic whiskers. As he spoke again he winked his left eye. Always he winked that eye when about to give expression to some joyous plan.

"We'll have a good visit an' a reg'lar Chris'mus dinner. Come down to the spring a minute. I want to show ye suthin' calcullated to improve the condition o' the poor."

They descended from the high ground to a wooded ravine. A covered dishpan was sunk in its cold spring. It held a small dressed turkey.

"My friend Muggins brought that to me, knowin' I expected company," Bumpy explained. "It makes him feel bad to see young turkeys sleepin' out-o'-doors, in a tree, these frosty nights. They ain't comf'table. He puts 'em out o' their misery."

The old man laughed as he added: "There ain't a-goin' to be no sufferin' here if I can help it." He turned to the boys and added almost sternly: "Cheer up. Don't look so solemn."

He walked with a knotty crooked stick cut in the woods. His artificial leg squeaked at every step. He limped a little but he could travel at a good pace. As they entered the house a strange gentle voice called out:

"Hello, pard! Are you happy?"

"Yes, Dick," Bumpy answered.

"Praise the Lord!" the voice exclaimed.

It came from a yellow-headed parrot in a cage that rested among some potted ferns on a window-sill. The floor was well swept. The whole interior of the little house was noticeably clean. A plain, square, kitchen-table stood in the center of its one room. It held a shaded lamp. Built into a corner was a mattressed lounge covered by a faded patch-work quilt. A pillow, in a clean white case, lay at one end of the lounge. The log walls were chinked with moss. A crayon portrait of a plain-looking woman hung on the wall.

"That's her—my wife," said the old man proudly as he stood looking at the portrait. "Just as nat'ral as can be—made from a photygraft. Alwus lookin' at me—the best woman that ever lived. Neat as a pin! She trained me good. I couldn't live in a dirty house with her a-watchin' of me. Died ten year ago, this comin' fall—September seventeenth, at four ten in the mornin' exac'ly."

He wiped his eyes with a faded bandanna handkerchief and went to the wood-box. He began to whittle kindlings for the stove—an old St. Lawrence stove with cracked griddles and an oven in the rear.

He stopped and looked up at the boys and added: "I said she died but she's still here—alwus speaks to me when I come home an' we talk things over same as we used to."

He hurried out-of-doors.

"Always hustles around like that after he's spoke his piece about her," said Bony with a smile.

Bumpy returned with an armful of wood. He turned to Bony and said:

"Say, listen to me. Ol' Bumpy Brown has quit drinkin'."

His eyes were now stern. His doubled fist was held in front of him to indicate the strength of his resolution. He shook his head as he continued:

"No more whisky fer him—not never no more! By Jeedix! I mean it. The las' time I come near breakin' my good leg an' then my wife an' I had a talk about it. She argued it out plain. An' then I had a dream an' I heard her voice. She screamed to me an' she said: 'Look out, Bill, look out!' I was scairt."

Bumpy shook his forefinger at Bony with this solemn declaration:

"If you ever see me drunk ag'in, you can take off my wooden leg an' split it up fer kindlin's. I guess the damn' thing would burn well."

The parrot broke into laughter and then said in a gentle voice: "God is love."

"My wife taught him that," said Bumpy. "He says it just as she used to say it to him. He's good comp'ny. Dear me, Suz! Guess I'd 'a' caved in long ago without him."

It would seem that the bird performed an important service in that little home. It was like the spirit of the dead.

"Nobody ever see you drinkin'," said Bony. "I supposed you got drunk thinkin' o' Cy Doolittle an' the scenery."

"Well, it's all over, an' I just as soon tell you boys suthin' if you'll keep it a secret. It's very private."

The boys indicated their respect for his confidence with unusual emphasis. Bumpy winked and sat down and pulled up his right trousers leg to the knee, exposing most of his wooden member. On one side was a little shelf with a hole in it and a cork in the hole.

"Ye see, all I had to do was buy a bottle o' whisky an' fill up my leg with it. That ol' leg holds enough to see snakes with. I made this lower part in two pieces out of a stick o' seasoned willer-wood. I hollered it out an' glued it together an' put a hinge

in the knee an' I can git around smart. When I wanted a drink I'd lift my pants leg an' stick a straw in the hole an' shift a part o' the load a little higher up. I call it my happy New Year leg."

The boys laughed.

"Yes, sir, my ol' leg an' me is goin' to behave."

Shad and Bony were almost as much interested in Bumpy's artificial foot as in this ingenious container. It had been most carefully shaped from a block of wood to the size of the living member, and was cleverly articulated to the leg. Bumpy removed the shoe and exhibited his handiwork with pride. Indeed he managed the whole contrivance with such skill and agility that only a slight limp and a squeak when he neglected to grease the joints betrayed the artifice.

He took down a fiddle hanging on the wall and said: "Here's the main shaft o' the fun works."

He tuned its strings and played *Money Musk* and *The Sailor's Hornpipe.* The bird sang joyously and Bony danced a jig as Bumpy played. He hung up the fiddle and said to Bony:

"If you'll run down an' bring up that turkey an' the butter, I'll start the doin's."

He laid his wood and kindlings for a fire and let down a table-top hinged on the wall. He took some

pots and pans from a small cupboard and began his work. Suddenly he exclaimed:

"The devil an' Cy Doolittle!"

"What's the matter?" Bony asked.

"I forgot to tell ye to bring up the bacon. It's in a small tin pail below the spring."

The boy ran and fetched the bacon.

"Is there anything more we can do?" Bony asked.

"Well, outside there's plenty o' scenery to be looked at. Speakin' o' Cy, he's one o' the greatest spavin rubbers in the world."

"He's always down on his knees workin' on a horse's leg," said Bony.

"The legs o' the ladies worry him a lot too," the old man declared. "I suppose he's afraid that some of 'em have got spavins."

Bony, bent on holding the old man to his favorite theme, offered this encouragement.

"I saw his father-in-law, old Oscar Perry, up at the wagon shop the other day. He was talkin' 'bout his son-in-laws. When he talks about them he'll pick out a mark about ten feet away an' spit at it. He hits it every time."

The bird indulged in a weird chortle.

Bumpy smiled and said:

"Well, Dick, you've never learnt how to make a fool o' yerself as I have. I've got a maggot in my brain."

Dick whistled a bar of the old bugle call for assembly.

Bumpy picked up a broom, shouldered it and marched briskly across the room as if obeying the call. Returning to his task he said:

"We have great times—that bird an' me. We visit together an' he sings purty. Little cuss likes to fight my hand. Sometimes we squabble like rats in a barrel—all in play. When I go a-tinkerin' I take him with me, carry him on a stick behind me, fastened to my pack. He amuses the fam'ly while I work. Everybody loves him. Betwixt us we can earn five dollars a day in the summer."

Bumpy had a jolly way of bullying the boys.

"Go an' wash yer hands an' comb yer hair," he said. "By Jeedix! Anybody would think that you was settin' down with common folks to a plain dinner. If any o' my rich friends should come I want ye to look right."

Bony had a nervous habit of winking and wrinkling his brow when amused.

"Stop screwin' up yer face that way," Bumpy would command. "Lord! Seems so the devil had

stepped on yer big toe. It makes ye look like Mrs. Smelts."

"Who is Mrs. Smelts?" Bony asked.

"Well, sir, I reckon she's the humliest woman in the world. Lives in Pitcairn. She'd wilt ye down. Smelts is dead. He must 'a' died lookin' at her. I'd ruther meet a munícorn on a dark night."

"What is a munícorn?"

"An animal my mother used to tell about with one sharp horn stickin' straight out of his forehead. Goes around spearin' bad boys with it. Sometimes he gits two or three boys strung on that long horn o' his. He takes 'em off an' feeds 'em to the bears."

So the time went until the turkey, well browned, and the baked potatoes and the fried fish were on the table all smoking hot. Then Bumpy brought to the banquet a pot of delicious coffee and a jug of cider "with a little edge on it." The feast began.

"When you've squashed a baked potater put on what butter ye think ye need, then double the amount," said Bumpy.

He kept the boys laughing with an account of the singular adventures of Dick and himself on the road. In telling these stories he was wont to use the first person plural. Even when speaking of his own thoughts he said "we" as if out of respect for his

comrade. It was different when he told of Pickett's charge at Gettysburg and of crawling into a clump of bushes with a bullet in his breast at Cold Harbor. Then he loved to strip aside his shirt bosom and lift his right sleeve to show the scars. There was a note of vanity in his stories. Some of them gave the impression that he was a man of amazing courage and fortitude. Then the scars!

By and by Bony had his turn. He knew all the droll sayings and misdeeds of Amity Dam. He told how old Sol Todd had been reformed. Sol was the solemnest-looking man that ever lived. He had come up from the big town drunk one evening and lay down in the park to sleep. Bony and some other boys had got a strip of a sheet and lettered it with lamp black and pinned it on his back. In the morning, unconscious of what was on him, he walked around the village bearing the legend:

KICKERS!
IF YOU WILL
KICK
KICK THIS!

"The last words were placed just right," added Bony with a laugh. While Bumpy was filling his pipe he turned to Shad Morryson and said: "Boy,

you ain't done a thing but laugh an' listen. Slip yer belt on the pulley an' keep the works a-goin'."

It was then that Shad's remarkable gift for imitation was discovered. He told a number of the stories of Phide Scott, the champion sneezer of Lost Lake, reproducing the droll dialect so faithfully that his friends roared with laughter. They sat talking the hours away until the sun was low. Suddenly Bumpy arose and began to pick up the dishes, saying: "And there lay round upon the ground great heaps of so'gers."

Bumpy used this rhymed picture as a kind of tail-piece to every situation. There was a touch of satirical humor in it. Doubtless at the lodge and at other places where old soldiers were wont to gather he had been fed up with bloody tales of the great conflict.

There was a rap at the door. Shad opened it. A well-dressed, handsome young lady about twenty years old stood looking at the boy with an expression of astonishment in her face. Her cheeks were as red as roses. Her eyes were large and dark; her hair was brown and wavy. She uttered no word of greeting.

Her manner was haughty when she said: "I want to see Mr. Brown."

She turned away as she spoke. Bumpy changed color. With a look of surprise and embarrassment he said:

"All right. I'll be with you in a minute."

The girl climbed the steps and disappeared. Bumpy put on his coat and hurried out-of-doors saying:

"Set down, boys. I'll be with you soon."

He closed the door behind him and followed the young lady. Through a window the boys saw them walk together into the edge of the thicket where they stood talking.

"Who is that?" Shad asked.

"Darned if I know," was Bony's answer. "But I'd like to set an' look at her for a week."

"She is pretty—no mistake," Shad agreed. "She's got the eyes of a young doe."

"Purty an' snippy as a cock-sparrow. She looked as if she wanted to slap yer face for being here."

Soon the girl went away.

Returning Bumpy stopped in front of the shack. The boys went out to him. He was tapping the side of a big mud turtle with his cane.

"This is an old friend o' mine," he said. "Comes out o' the bog there every evenin' to see the country.

Carries his house around with him. Sometimes he uses it for a boat.

"I've got another friend. He's the biggest toad in the world. I call him Toby Scott on account o' the size o' his belly. Uncle Toby comes hoppin' up the steps every summer evenin' an' sets on my piaz an' watches me. He looks as solemn as Deacon Plumb. Now an' then he'll hop for a fly an' come down with a consid'able swat. I laugh at him, but he never cracks a smile. I don't blame him. He has to tend right strict to business every minute to make a livin'. Got only one tool to work with an' that's his mouth."

He did not speak of his mysterious caller. He finished his work. He put some tools and clothing in his pack basket.

"Well, boys, we'll go along with ye," he said cheerfully. "Dick an' me are goin' to Bolton to-night so we can begin work in the mornin'. There won't be a leak in that town when we git through with it."

Two small green sticks having four crotches were lashed on either side of the basket. They sloped upward and backward. A lashed rod lay in the lower crotches. This was Dick's saddle. The rim of the basket helped the bird to balance himself

when necessary. Released from his cage, Dick laughed joyously and shouted, "Come on," and flew to his perch behind the pack basket now on the back of his master. He chortled as if greatly pleased when they locked the door behind them and set out on their journey. In a moment, settled on his perch he soberly declared:

"Money makes the mare go."

The boys laughed. It was indeed an outfit as curious and as amusing as any that ever took to the road. Bumpy stopped suddenly and turned to his two companions and said:

"By Jeedix, boys! We've had fun an' we'll have some more. I like you. If ary one o' you ever needs a friend er a home, come to me."

When he had returned that evening Shad succeeded in writing a letter to Ruth Blake in which he felt a sense of pride and satisfaction. It told of his day with Bumpy Brown. Its spelling and grammar would later have made him wince but not in his best days could he have improved its humor.

CHAPTER V

THE IMMEDIATE FOREGROUND OF THE MYSTERY

SHAD spent a year and a half in the little village. It was enlivened by many visits to the Fun Shop in Brown's Cove. The mysterious young lady had thrown a glamour of romance upon it. Once Bony had spoken playfully of their admiration and of their wish to see her again. Bumpy Brown looked serious and quickly changed the topic. He never spoke of her. The boys had jolly times with the tinker and his bird. The old man had grown fond of them. Always he greeted his young friends with joy.

"Well, boys, come down fer another gander party," he would say when they were leaving him.

He entertained them with quaint jests and thrilling tales and good food. Once he had roasted a brace of black ducks which he had shot on the river and again he gave them partridges from the wooded

edges of the great pasture below the cove. He was prepared for their coming; he no longer got his supplies from "Muggins." His good-natured, merry talk, not like that of any other man, had made them fond of him. They were keen-minded boys. They suspected that his stories were not all true, that his alleged friend "Muggins" was a fiction. In spite of all this, they loved to be with Bumpy Brown.

Shad had now begun to find himself. He was growing in strength, stature and wisdom. He played on the village ball team. He was a fast runner and could jump twelve feet with dumb-bells. He had learned how to study. He had acquired an almost sinful longing for good clothes. Still he liked not less good books and good company. His friend, the village doctor, had lent him the novels of Reade and Dickens and the poems of Longfellow and Tennyson. He had spent delightful evenings in the doctor's study listening to the talk of the learned man about books and the wonders of chemistry and electricity. His best creditors were the doctor, the grammar and the dictionary. He had begun to enjoy his letter-writing. He had a sense of pride in the long letter that he had written to Mr. Converse. He sought permission to read it to his friend, Doctor Gorse, who had been immensely pleased by its

diction, tone and spirit. It was a modest letter full of boyish humor.

'It has a dictionary flavor that betrays the boy, but it is a boy with the heart of a gentleman and a mind that is finding its way," said his friend. "You have an imagination and you are learning how to use it."

Mr. Converse was so pleased with the letter that he sent a check of fifty dollars to the boy and bade him do as he pleased with the money. Shad went to Ashfield and bought fine raiment. That day he wrote a letter to Ruth Blake in which he said:

"At last I can come to visit you without being intimidated and oppressed by soiled garments. I defy any one to be a gentleman who associates every day with linseed oil, molasses and kerosene. I am proud. I hope that you will like my new clothes and *me*. We have gone into partnership and our business is to make a good impression on you. If we fail I shall not blame the clothes but I shall think that I am in very bad luck."

It must be said that the undertaking was successful. On three Sundays that autumn he and the new clothes were engaged in this romantic enterprise. The handsome lad and the girl went canoeing and rode about the countryside together. The boy succeeded in getting himself deeply in love. The last

of these visits was on a Sunday late in October. The colonel was not at home. Shad ate a midday dinner with Ruth and her mother. The girl left them for a time to go out on an errand. This was a purely strategic move. The friendly gentlewoman and the boy talked together.

"Amity Dam is no place for you," said Mrs. Blake. "I'm going to try to help you out of that mire of rusticity. You must come to Canton and go to school. The colonel and I have been laying plans. I have no boy and I could be a kind of mother to you."

"I should like that. I would be very proud."

"You need a mother or a father to whom you could bring your troubles. You are so young."

"Well, my greatest trouble is the fact that I am so young."

"Do you call that a trouble? I wish that I were back at your age. I was in love at seventeen. It was the beginning of a great happiness."

The boy was quick to take advantage of this opening. He was loaded for it. He blushed as he looked at her and said:

"I guess that I know how you felt. You loved to lie down at night and be alone with your happiness. In the morning the birds sang of the love in your

heart. Even the flowers in the field knew your secret. They looked at you and nodded their heads as if they would give you encouragement. That is the way they treat me."

"You?"

"Yes, they are always reminding me of the colors in her hair and eyes and cheeks. I think that the sun and the moon and the stars shine only to show her face to me."

The lady came and kissed the boy's cheek.

"My child! Are you in love?"

"Yes, but I am not a child."

"Whom do you love?"

"Your daughter."

Mrs. Blake took the boy's hand and laughed.

"In love! and getting one hundred and fifty dollars a year!" she exclaimed with good-natured amusement. "I suppose that you and your wife could get along on bread and water."

"I'm not always going to be poor."

"Your school-days have scarcely begun."

"I learn fast. I shall get along."

"The time to fall in love is after you have got along, not before."

"It comes when it comes. Nobody can tell when he will fall in love."

"I wouldn't take this so seriously. You'll get over it."

"Never! You don't know how bad it is. I would rather die than give it up. I want to be engaged to Ruth."

"It is impossible. You are both far too young."

"But you were only seventeen when you fell in love."

"True, but those days things were different and I was not engaged for a year after that. The colonel was then three years older than I—old enough to be sure of himself. Now, Shad, I must ask you to promise me on your word of honor as a gentleman that you will say nothing to Ruth of this until I give you permission to do it. We'll see how you get along and we shall do everything that we can do to help you. If you keep your love for her and if she should be fond of you we will have another talk about it by and by."

"She knows that I love her. I couldn't help telling her the last time we met. She asked me to talk it over with you."

The lady laughed again and said: "What a romantic young Romeo you are. You astonish me. Remember it must go no further at present."

"I will make the promise and keep it, but if I see

that some other fellow is trying to get her I shall be courting you again. It would be hard for me to keep myself from jumping in."

"Don't worry. You have the inside track. We are all fond of you. Let's see what happens."

Shad returned to his task in Amity Dam a bit depressed. Soon after that an unexpected trouble came upon him. One of the gold rings had been missing from its show-case for a week. The jewelry of Amity Dam was no great help to Satan. It was not likely to devastate the soul of any clean-minded, well-meaning lad. Yet since the loss had been discovered Shad had observed a difference—slight but unmistakable—in the manner of Mr. and Mrs. Smithers. Indeed, he thought that other people had begun to treat him coolly.

The next Sunday afternoon Shad and Bony went down to Brown's Cove.

Bumpy had broken a crane's wing with his shotgun. He had captured the crane, in the course of which undertaking he had suffered some pecking. As the boys approached the shack Bumpy came up the shore leading the bird with a fish-line fast to its neck.

"What did ye put a cork on his bill for?" Bony asked.

"So'st he can't peck," said Bumpy.

"Can he peck?"

"Tol'able severe. When he hits anything he calculates to put a hole in it an' he ain't often disapp'inted."

"What ye goin' to do with him?"

"Put a splint on his wing an' see if I can mend it. I couldn't leave him there to suffer. I'll feed him an' keep him quiet an' maybe I can tinker him up."

He tied the crane in his little woodshed and took the boys into the house. There Shad told Bumpy of his trouble.

"Folks are just nat'rally cussed mean," said Bumpy. "They're made that way. By Jeedix! They can't help it no more'n a toad can help havin' warts. If they git a chance to believe that the devil has hold o' yer hand, they're apt to take it. I heard t'other day in a house where I was tinkerin' that you an' Bony was wild. I says: 'Them boys are all right. Till they've learnt their lesson be easy on 'em. They'll come out as straight as a loon's leg.' "

Boys are quick to detect the note of insincerity. They knew that Bumpy spoke from his heart in spite of his own bitterness.

"I'm a tongue-lasher myself," the man went on. "I ain't no angel. I've seen the time when I'd steal

a turkey 'fore I'd have any one come to my house an' go away hungry. I couldn't stand that. From now on it'll be different. The woman an' I have talked it all over."

Bumpy went to the stove and whittled his kindlings. Suddenly he came to Shad.

"Boy, I forgot yer trouble," he said. "Tell me about that ring. When did ye see it last?"

"When I was showing it and some other trinkets to a girl the other day."

"What girl?"

"I don't know her name. She was about eighteen years old—light-colored hair an' blue eyes. She had pretty teeth an' a turned-up nose. There was a scar on her left cheek. Wore a blue dress."

"I'm afraid she's rather light-fingered," said Bumpy. "I know her, an' what folks say in her neighborhood—a few miles south o' here. I'm a-goin' up there in a day or two. I'll see what I can do. Don't worry."

Bumpy had a loin of venison for dinner. Some one just out of the woods had given it to him on his last jaunt. The boys watched him while he cut it into strips and laid it on a board. He began to beat it with a hammer, adding now and then a slice of bacon and a pinch of salt and pepper. This was

beaten into the venison. When the pulp was ready it was a square more than an inch thick. This was carefully deposited on the broiler and grilled over a bed of glowing, wood-coals. It was a delicate and arduous undertaking, the broiler being turned every two or three seconds "to keep the juice in," as Bumpy was wont to say. Then he looked as solemn as a priest at the altar. He would take no part in the conversation. When at last it lay on the hot platter with its golden crown of melting butter it filled the room with a memorable fragrance.

"Now, boys, ye may forget my name but my meat is a thing you'll remember," said Bumpy.

They had a merry feast which became a topic even of their later years. The shack and the art and heart of its owner had become a kind of oasis in their desert.

As they were leaving Bumpy said:

"Come down next Sunday. I may have some news."

The next Sunday, to avoid criticism, they went to meeting and promptly set out for Brown's Cove. They started at a dog-trot.

"I always feel like runnin' when I leave the Sob Works," said Bony, laughing as he ran. "I'd yell too if I dared."

Bumpy was standing by the door. He waved his hat as they came up and called out:

"By Jeedix, boys! I'm happy! See that?"

He held up the gold ring between his thumb and forefinger. Shad trembled with excitement. "How did you get it?" he asked.

"Oh, I went an' see that gal an' I jus' scared it out o' her. Told her she'd have to give it back or go to jail. She broke down and handed it over. It was kind o' pitiful. I told her nobody would even know her name an' they won't—not from me. I'm a-goin' to take it to Smithers an' tell him how I come by it."

They sat down to their dinner of roasted partridges and baked potatoes and pumpkin pie.

"There's just one fly in my ointment," said Bumpy as he began to carve the birds.

"What's that?" Bony asked.

"I've been drunk ag'in. Met an old comrade. We got to talkin' 'bout the second day at Gettysburg. There's suthin' cur'us 'bout Gettysburg. It's slippery ground. He had a bottle, we walked to Brown's Cove in the cool o' the night an' got drunk on the way. We sot down here an' fit the rebels till daylight. If I could fergit Gettysburg an' some other things, I'd be respectable."

They ate a moment in silence. Then Bumpy added:

"One drink will put the devil in me. The old sores begin to bleed. But I'm through—by Jeedix! Never no more whisky fer me. I'm through. The woman has looked purty solemn since then."

"What has become of the crane?" Bony asked.

"He pecked me once too often. I couldn't stan' it."

Bumpy laughed, adding: "And there lay round upon the ground great heaps of so'gers."

The partridges, basted with strings of bacon, had been carefully roasted in the oven. They were a cheering sight when Bumpy brought them to the table.

"Now set down an' stop yer chatterin'," said the old man. "You'll find out that a bird in a boy is worth two in the bush."

He carved the birds and loaded their plates. It was no time for idle words. Talk was not resumed until each had dulled his appetite on the bones. Then Bumpy began his tales of thrilling and improbable adventure.

When the boys thanked him and bade him good-by the sun was low. They left with a most friendly feeling for the old man.

The chilly winds of November had shaken the trees bare. One day Mr. Smithers sent Shad down to Cyrus Doolittle's with a package of medicine which had come up on the stage for old Oscar Perry, the father-in-law of Cyrus. Here was the ill-fated house which Shad was never to forget. The old gentleman was sitting in a wheel-chair. He had the worried, sorrowful look of the strong man who has had his warning. He had been partly paralyzed by a stroke. His daughter, Mrs. Doolittle, opened the door for Shad. She was an erect handsome woman with a face somewhat care-worn but still comely.

The house had a gloomy and depressing atmosphere. The wind whistled mournfully in the naked trees that overhung it. There was a solemn note in the ticking of the old family clock. After all, houses have a kind of character. Cyrus Doolittle and his son Moses, a boy of Shad's age, were cleaning a pair of colts tethered on the barn floor. His errand accomplished, Shad went out for a look at the colts. The boy turned from his work to speak to Shad. His father rebuked him, saying:

"Come, boy, I'm in a hurry to get away. Bring the harness."

Turning to the young clerk, he asked: "Young man, are you loafing to-day?"

"No, sir."

"Well, you don't seem to be very busy."

The tall, brown-bearded, gray-eyed man had spoken in his hustling manner without stopping his work.

Late in the afternoon of the memorable tenth of November Shad had gone down the road some two miles to collect a bill. Darkness overtook him on his way back. He was hungry and hurrying with a bicycle lantern in his hand, so as not to be too late for his supper. When about a quarter of a mile from the store he dimly saw a man approaching him at a rapid pace. He could hear his footsteps on the rough frozen road. Shad stopped. The man had turned suddenly, some sixty paces from where Shad was standing, got over the fence and hurried away in the darkness. As Shad came near the store he saw a crowd of people in the street. Men were shouting. Hysterical women were crying. Shad ran toward the crowd in front of the store. Bony was there.

"What's the matter?" Shad asked.

"What's the matter! Why, some man just bust into Cy Doolittle's house—not ten minutes ago—an' shot up the hull fam'ly, murdered 'em right an' left. The ol' man is killed. Mis' Doolittle an' the

teacher is over to Silas Meriwether's mos' dead an' bleedin' awful. It was like a battle in the war."

A singular paralysis of fear and distress had fallen upon the good people of that village. A few men had rushed out in the roads and fields in a vain quest for the criminal.

"Come on! I saw him," Shad said to Bony, and the two ran at top speed down the road toward the point where Shad had seen the man climb over the fence and vanish in the darkness. It was near the Doty place. The man must have gone around the barns and then whither, it was impossible to say. The boys were in deadly fear of finding the criminal but saw nobody.

"We're darn' fools," said Bony as they were wearily walking back. "What would we have done with him an' what would he have done to us? They say ol' Bumpy Brown is the murderer."

"Lord, no!" Shad exclaimed. "It can't be."

"Less he's gone crazy. Two men have run down the river to see if he's to home."

So began the wildest night in the history of Amity Dam.

CHAPTER VI

THE PROBLEM

DIVESTED of all the excitement and wild rumor of that night, this is the problem—one of the most remarkable in the criminal records of our country.

Mrs. Doolittle, her invalid father, her son Moses, a boy of twelve, and Henry Pierson, a handsome, well-dressed young man of nineteen from Ashfield who was teaching in the school at Amity Dam, were sitting around the evening lamp, about seven o'clock, the work of the day being finished. Cyrus Doolittle had gone to Griggsby, some fifteen miles away.

Suddenly this family group heard a rap at the front door. The boy Moses ran and opened it. A man, masked in a peculiar way, stood before him. He wore a small, light-colored slouch hat, tan overalls and a coat of the same material. His face was covered with a red and white handkerchief. The

man advanced into the room holding a revolver in his right hand. The boy fled before him through a door at the back of the house. The intruder walked with the limp of Bumpy Brown. Henry Pierson bravely took a step toward him. The first bullet was fired at the young man, breaking his left arm at the elbow. Shocked and frightened, the latter partly fell on a lounge, then ran out of the open door calling for help.

The masked man fired at Mrs. Doolittle, who had risen from her chair. The ball struck her breast above her heart and glanced, penetrating the flesh of her shoulder. She did not fall. She stood appalled. The man approached her. Then came a curious factor in the problem. He stood for a second, close in front of her, the revolver pointed at her face. He did not fire. This gave color to the theory that she was not the one that he had come to kill. He dealt her something between a blow and a vigorous push with his left hand. It appeared that he was trying to get her out of the scene.

She fell, quickly recovered her feet and ran through the open door from which her son and young Pierson had fled into the darkness beyond. As she fell old Oscar Perry, her invalid father, threw himself forward from his chair and seized the

skirts of the intruder's coat and clung to them with his strong hands. The masked man clubbed him with his revolver but still he clung. Two shots with the muzzle of the weapon close to the invalid's neck loosened his hold. The old man slumped to the floor.

The murderer ran out into the darkness and away, firing a shot as he went. All this had been accomplished in less than a minute. Mrs. Doolittle, her son and the teacher had fled to a neighbor's house, and help had been sent to Oscar Perry.

News of the crime sped through the village like a wind-driven fire in dead grass. Within five minutes the wires were flashing it through the county. Doctors, the district attorney, the sheriff, the county judge were presently speeding toward the little village of Amity Dam.

The lights were burning most of the night in Ephraim Smithers' store. For a time it was filled with excited residents. Many theories and exclamations of horror were in the subdued murmurs of the crowd. Most of them agreed that Bumpy Brown was the guilty man. With these Shad and Bony openly took issue.

"He wouldn't have done it even if he was drunk," they said. "He's the most harmless critter in the world when he's drunk."

"What was he always knockin' the Doolittles for?" the doubters asked.

The boys had to acknowledge that they did not know, that it was probably some crazy notion he had got in his head.

About nine o'clock a man entered the store with important news. Cy Doolittle had just got home with lathered horses. He had arrived at Ashfield and heard of the crime about eight-thirty and driven like mad to his house. He was over to Meriwether's where his wife lay dying. He had said that Bumpy Brown was the only man he knew who had a grudge against him. He had put Brown off his place one day and the old man had sworn that he would get even.

"I told you there was something like that," said those whose theories involved the tinker.

Moreover, the newcomer announced that the doctors had come and were then working over Mrs. Doolittle, young Pierson and the old man Perry, who was nearly dead. The sheriff, the district attorney and the county judge were at the Doolittle house looking over the ground. Nobody would be allowed to pass the place or go near it until after daylight. They were looking for tracks and didn't want the ground to be disturbed.

Soon these ministers of justice came to the store. Colonel Blake gave Shad a hearty greeting. The colonel was calm and dignified. He said to the boy:

"My wife and I have done a lot of talking about you. We have enjoyed your letters."

Shad told of the man who approached him in the road and took to the fields when he saw the boy and his bicycle lantern.

"That is curious," said the colonel. "We may hear more about him. First, we'll have some crackers and cheese and ginger ale."

While the officials were eating the two men who had gone down the river arrived with old Bumpy Brown. A silence fell as they entered. The tinker, who preceded the men, looked pale and serious. Shad observed that Bumpy's leg did not squeak as he walked. The thought came to him that probably he had greased its joints. A voice from a huddled group near the door, clearly audible to all in the room, said:

"He's a dam' murderer!"

Colonel Blake turned quickly and said: "Look here, my friends, it is for me to say who is the murderer, not you. I request you all to go to your homes and beware of hasty judgments. In the excitement of this hour it is easy to be wrong."

He turned to Mr. Smithers and said: "If you will ask these good people to go home and lock your door, I shall perhaps be able to arrive at some conclusion of my own."

The villagers slowly filed out of the store. The door was locked. Bumpy Brown, the two men who had found him, the officials, Mr. Smithers and Shad were now present. Some sat on the counters, some in chairs around the stove. Colonel Blake was standing. He turned to the tinker, asking:

"Is this Mr. Brown?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am the district attorney of this county, and here is Sheriff Colewell and this is Judge Swift. You know, I presume, that a crime was committed about seven o'clock this evening at the home of Cyrus Doolittle."

"These men has told me," Bumpy answered.

"You perhaps do not know that Mr. Doolittle and others suspect you of being the criminal."

"They didn't tell me what Cy Doolittle said, but they told me what other folks was sayin'. They said the murderer had a limp like mine. Well, mister, I can't help it if he did, I ain't hurt nobody. When I come in here every one had a knife in his eye fer ol' Bumpy Brown. I'm all 'lone in the world. I ain't

got no friends, but I tell ye I ain't hurt nobody since I was a so'ger an' it was my business to hurt folks."

There was a touch of pathos in the voice of the man as he spoke these words.

Shad was tempted to say, "I am your friend," but he held his peace in the presence of these great men.

The district attorney directed Sheriff Colewell to search the man for weapons. This was done. Only a key and a jack-knife were found in his clothing.

Colonel Blake took out his pencil and writing pad as he said: "Mr. Brown, I am going to ask you some questions and take down what you say in reply. First it is my duty to inform you that it is your privilege to refuse to answer any question I may ask. My advice is that you ought not to answer any question which would tend to prove your guilt."

"Oh, it's thirty-three years since I harmed anybody 'cept myself. I ain't afraid to tell ye all ye want to know 'bout me. I may be 'shamed to tell ye, but I shan't be scared."

"Where were you at seven o'clock this evening?"

"Out on the river fishin' fer bull pout."

"Was any one with you?"

"No."

"In what part of the river were you fishing?"

"'Bout half a mile from my shack."

"Above or below your place."

"Above."

"Did any one see you fishing?"

"Guess not. 'Twas mos' dark when I started."

"Did no boat pass you?"

"None."

"Did you get any fish?"

"No."

"What did you do to-day?"

The old man told of going to Piermont to fix a leaky roof. He had returned to his shack about five; had lain down for a nap, and gone out to fish an hour or so later.

"Do you own a revolver?"

"No. I have never owned a revolver."

"What was your opinion of Cyrus Doolittle?"

"I have never liked him."

"Why?"

"Why does a man hate skunks?"

"Was there bad blood between you? Did you have any quarrel with him?"

"Oh, he shoved me off his place one day."

"Did you threaten him?"

"I wouldn't wonder. I dunno what I said. Nobody does when he's as mad as a hornet."

"Did you have any other quarrel?"

"No, sir."

"Why did he shove you off his place?"

"Well, he was kind o' high an' mighty an' I told him that I thought Oscar Perry had one more dog than he really needed."

Colonel Blake smiled with amusement as he said:

"I think that I have no further questions to ask at present."

He turned to his associates.

"There's one other matter," said the county judge. "This man has on a pair of new rubbers."

"That's so, I hadn't noticed it," said Blake.

"Mr. Brown, I presume that you will not object to my taking the measure of your foot," said the judge.

"No, sir. You can do anything to my feet but step on the good one."

Judge Swift began the measurements with a pocket rule, while Bumpy rested his feet on a chair bottom, announcing them to Colonel Blake, who noted them on his pad as follows:

Width of heel two and fifteen-sixteenths; length of heel three and seven-sixteenths; width of ball three and three-quarters; width of toe two and one-half; length ten and three-quarters.

Colonel Blake turned to Smithers and said: "Will you retire to the rear room with Sheriff Colewell and Mr. Brown and close the door, if you please? We shall not detain you long."

The three promptly retired, leaving Shad, the colonel and the judge together.

"How do the measurements compare?" the judge inquired.

"They are exactly alike," the colonel answered.

"What!"

"They are identical with the rubber tracks we measured this evening leading down through the fields back of the Doolittle house."

"My God! I guess we must have the man we want."

"Well, we shall have to hold him," the colonel remarked with a puzzled look.

"He was a foolish man not to get rid of those rubbers."

"Perhaps. It's curious. He doesn't act like a guilty man. Yet here are the facts. No alibi, the tracks and a degree of motive. It is likely that right after he had landed from his boat in the darkness those men caught him. He couldn't take 'em off then."

"His mistake was that he didn't dump them into

the river," said the judge. "But of course he was in a hurry and not expecting to be grabbed as soon as he got ashore. Murderers always make a mistake at some point in their proceedings or the law would have a hard time."

This conference was interrupted by a singular event.

The boy Shad, who had been sitting on the counter listening with deep interest to the talk of the two men, having covered his face in his elbow, was silently sobbing. The colonel, touched by his outbreak of sympathetic emotion, put his hand on the boy's shoulder and spoke to him like a gentle father.

"Don't worry, lad. The man shall have every chance to prove his innocence. You're very tired. Please go home now and to bed."

Shad jumped off the counter, wiping his eyes. He whispered to the colonel: "If you take him away to jail, please take his bird with him."

"His bird! Has he a bird? All right. The bird shall be his fellow prisoner. They'll be well treated."

Shad went home and to bed, saying before he went to sleep the first real prayer of his life for old Bumpy Brown.

The sheriff, Smithers and the tinker were sum-

moned from the rear room. Colonel Blake addressed these words to the suspected man:

"Mr. Brown, tracks leading from Cyrus Doolittle's house were either made by your rubbers or a pair exactly like them. The evidence against you is strong. Have you anything further to say?"

"No, sir."

"Where did you get the rubbers?"

"At Hubbard's store in South Bolton."

"When?"

"About a week ago."

"We shall have to take you to Canton. There you will be held for examination. The sheriff will go with you to your house. You can take your bird and some clothing with you."

The old man sat filling his pipe.

"Don't matter much," he said. "I ain't scared o' dyin'—not a bit. But you're barkin' up the wrong tree, mister."

"Well, I may be barking up another tree tomorrow," the colonel answered.

The sheriff went with his prisoner to the lonely little shack on Brown's Cove. The bird shook himself as they entered and greeted them with joyous exclamations.

"Praise the Lord!" he shouted as they wrapped

an old shawl around the cage. Then they locked the door and set out for Canton in the sheriff's buggy, the bird under the blankets between them.

The judge and the district attorney went to Ashfield to spend the remainder of the night. The sheriff met them at Smithers' store at nine o'clock the next morning. He had brought with him the key of Brown's shack. They found the two men who had gone down the river to look for Bumpy after the crime.

Mrs. Doolittle was weak from loss of blood but likely to recover. Her father still lingered, dimly conscious but unable to speak. The doctor had extracted one bullet from his neck, one had gone so deep that it could not be reached, another—and that no doubt, was the one which had struck Mrs. Doolittle—had been found on the floor. The two bullets were delivered to Colonel Blake.

Shad took the judge and the district attorney to the part of the road where, the night before, the unknown man had left it and taken to the field. At length they located the point with absolute precision. They saw where he had turned and gone into the ditch. Beyond the low fence in a fallow cornfield they could discern the familiar rubber tracks. The judge measured them.

"The same tracks!" he exclaimed. "He went below, crossed the road somewhere and got into his boat. Did you observe whether he limped or not?"

Shad could not say, the night was too dark. But he did not believe that Bumpy Brown could travel so fast as that man was going. He thought that the man he saw wore a broad-brimmed hat. He could not be sure of it.

They walked down the road a mile or so but saw no more rubber tracks. The road had begun to soften in the sunlight and had been disturbed by much travel through the night.

The two men who had brought the tinker to Smithers' store were Ellery Anderson, a carpenter of middle age, and Richard Berry, a mason, somewhat younger. These men were often working in Ashfield and other villages. They had families and were respected members of the community of Amity Dam. They went with Colonel Blake and his associates and the boy Shad Morryson to Brown's Cove. The colonel had requested Smithers to allow Shad to go with the party. On the road the shrewd lawyer questioned the boy touching his knowledge of the tinker. Shad told of his visits to the little shack and of Bumpy's good nature and

merry talk and of the old man's love of his bird and the portrait of his wife.

"That is curious," the colonel remarked. "And were you and Bony fond of him?"

"Yes, sir."

"A hospitable man! Good-natured! A lover of his dead wife and of the company of boys! It's all very much in his favor."

They had come to the rickety turnstile, near which the men hitched their horses and took the winding path. The district attorney and the judge stood a moment surveying the curious little home of the tinker. They laughed.

"What a compound of art and poverty!" the colonel exclaimed. "I like the way the roof sweeps down close to the ground and its curious patch-work."

They descended to its door, which the sheriff had unlocked, and entered its one room. The sunlight was streaming through the windows in its south gable. An old clock was ticking on its shelf. They surveyed the crayon portrait.

"It's a decent, motherly face," the colonel remarked. "Her spirit is here. The place is as neat as wax."

They searched the cupboard, a small closet and

every nook and corner and crevice in and around the house. Under the broad overhang of the eaves, toward the river, an old black knit jacket hung on a wooden peg. In one of its pockets they made a really important discovery:

Two loaded, square-based pistol cartridges.

The sheriff called to his associates. "What do you think of that?" he asked as he displayed them.

The colonel examined them.

"Thunder and Mars!" he exclaimed. "Well, the pistol must be here somewhere."

"I'll bet he threw it in the river," said the sheriff.

"That may be," the colonel answered. "But such a man is not apt to throw away things that cost so much. If he did, he would do it carefully."

He turned to Anderson and Berry and asked: "How long did it take you to get here?"

Berry answered: "Not more than ten or twelve minutes. We got in with Tip Beach a little below the corner. He ran his horse."

"You beat Brown in getting here."

"Yes, sir. He came three or four minutes after we arrived."

"Just where did he land?"

"Right there near them bushes," Berry answered.

"Coming down-stream?"

"Yes, and nigh the shore. We heard him coming. He was rowing fast."

"Did he see you before he landed?"

"Yes, sir. We sang out to him: 'Is that you, Brown?' He slowed up an' says, 'Ay uh! It's me.' I held the ol' boat while he got out. I told him what had happened an' that folks thought he was the murderer."

"What did he say?"

" 'God almighty!' he says. 'I'll go up an' face 'em. I knew hell was goin' to break loose somewhere. I been feelin' it in my bones.' "

"Did he go in or near the house?"

"No, sir. We started right off."

They dismissed the two men, who went away. The colonel said:

"Now, Judge, if my theory is correct, we'll find that pistol on the river bottom near the shore. He was not expecting company when he got here. He had cast away the oversuit. He thought that he would have time to hide the revolver. He had hurried. They sang out to him. He slowed up and dropped his weapon. He had forgotten about those cartridges in the old jacket or else he intended to dispose of them when he came in."

Shad went out in the boat with the colonel.

For some distance from its shore the river was bottomed with shelving rock partly covered with silt and gravel and decayed leaves. Beyond this shelf the water deepened rapidly. The bottom was clearly visible to keen eyes in the sunlight. Shad lay over the bow of the boat, face downward, while the colonel in the stern paddled.

"I see something shiny," said the boy after a few minutes. "It's over my head, I guess. I'll dive for it if you'll hold the boat."

Shad threw off his clothes and when the shiny object was again in view he dove out of the boat and swam to the bottom. Quickly he came up with a revolver in his hands, its nickeled barrel gleaming in the sunlight. They went ashore. With a heavy heart Shad dressed himself. He knew not what to think of all this. The lad found it easy to dry his body but not his eyes. Without feeling cold he shivered so that his teeth were chattering. He stood confused and sorrowful in the midst of the ruins of his faith. What could he say now? Both he and Bony had suspected that Bumpy Brown would not spoil a story for the need of a lie, but why had he lied about the revolver and put his life in danger by doing it, unless he were really guilty?

The colonel stood examining the weapon.

"There is no rust," he said. "It has been only a few hours in the water. There are five exploded shells in its magazine—one for Pierson, one for Mrs. Doolittle, two for the old gentleman, one that was fired outside the house to frighten possible pursuers. This is the revolver that did the work."

Turning to Shad, he remarked:

"Well, boy, I'm afraid that you have been in rather bad company."

Shad did not answer him.

Turning to Judge Swift the prosecutor remarked:

"The case would seem to be complete if this is really the weapon. I never expected to discover a Jekyll and Hyde in this county."

"The type is common, though rarely so perfect," said the judge. "This boy should understand that he is to say nothing of what has developed here."

"I won't tell, but I'm goin' to do some thinkin'," said the boy. "I know it looks awful bad for ol' Bumpy Brown."

CHAPTER VII

A TURN IN THE TIDE

THE colonel and the judge returned to the home of Cyrus Doolittle. Oscar Perry was near his end, but he had rallied so far that he was able to recognize them and to speak in a whisper. They took his ante-mortem statement. It was to this effect: He did not know who had shot him. The intruder had his face covered with a colored handkerchief which fell below his chin. There were holes in it opposite his eyes. He walked with a limp. He could not say that it was the man known as Bumpy Brown.

Mrs. Doolittle was able to talk to them. She agreed with her father as to the mask and the limp of her assailant. She could not be sure but thought that he was Bumpy Brown because of his height and carriage and well-known hatred of her husband. She knew of no reason for the hatred save

that her husband had once put him off the place. The intruder had fired four shots in the house and one outside the door in leaving it. The statements of the boy Moses and the teacher agreed with hers. The officials returned to their homes. The flame of life in Oscar Perry grew dim and flickered out.

Within a week Bumpy Brown had his examination at the county-seat. The court-room was crowded. Cyrus Doolittle was an important witness. He had driven to Griggsby on the day of the murder to attend to some business in that village. The business done, he had driven to Ashfield, arriving there about four o'clock. His colts were tired. He put them in the stable of the Westminster Hotel. He did some errands on the street. He was suffering from indigestion. He felt cold and rather dizzy. He went into the barroom of the Kensington Hotel for a drink and met some friends there. They drank with him. He lay down on a lounge in the shop of his stepson, Robert Royce, on the island, and fell asleep. In a straightforward, candid manner he accounted for every hour of his time that afternoon until about eight-thirty when he was going to get his team. Near the bridge he met James Evarts who told him what had happened in his home. All this was

corroborated by good witnesses. He showed depth of feeling for his wife and father-in-law when he told of his arrival at his desolated home.

He swore to Bumpy Brown's ill-feeling for him. He knew of no cause for it save a scuffle in which he had put the tinker off his place. Brown had then vowed that he would get even. He declared that his stepson, Robert Royce, and others had heard the vow of Bumpy Brown and knew of his bitter feeling.

Robert Royce was called to the stand. He was asked to tell what he knew of the ill feeling between his stepfather, Cyrus Doolittle, and the man Bumpy Brown. This reputable witness averred:

"When Cyrus Doolittle came to my shop about five o'clock on November tenth, I was chatting with a man who had been telling about the scandalous talk of the old tinker. After Mr. Doolittle lay down I locked the shop and went up-stairs to my room and got me a bite to eat. Then I lit a lamp an' lay down on a bed an' read some story papers. I didn't have a telephone. So when Mr. Doolittle woke up and asked me to let him out of the shop about half past eight I didn't know of the shooting. I told him then that he'd better look out for the tinker or he'd be done up. I was at Doolittle's the

day that Cyrus put him off his place. The old man acted dreadful vicious."

The attractive face and personality of Henry Pierson excited much comment. The ladies present were inclined to believe that the shooting was connected with some romance in which he had had a part. He remembered the limp, the hat and mask and the general appearance of the murderer. He was about the size of Bumpy Brown.

The doctors and other witnesses were sworn. Motive was proved to the satisfaction of the judge. The tinker stood by the statements he had made on the night of the murder. The rubbers were put in evidence. Shad and the sheriff testified as to the finding of the cartridges and the revolver. The district attorney presented his theory. It was conclusive. The only dissenters in the court-room were the boys, Bony and Shad. Old Bumpy Brown was held for the grand jury, which promptly indicted him for murder in the first degree.

The prisoner limped out of court with the sheriff and his deputy. The district attorney stood receiving the congratulations of friends when Shad and Bony approached. Colonel Blake greeted them.

"I know it looks bad, but I don't think he's guilty," said Shad.

"What are your reasons?"

"He is not mean enough," was Shad's answer.

"It's the same old reason that has been pleaded since Cain killed Abel," the colonel laughed. "I don't complain because a boy's heart is better than his head. It ought to be. Come over to the house and spend the night with us."

"I'd like to, but I must get back to-night. Could we go and see Bumpy a few minutes?"

"Certainly, I'll go with you."

Bumpy was glad to see them. He stood behind iron bars. He smiled, reaching through the bars and shaking their hands cheerfully as he had been wont to do in Brown's Cove.

"We wanted you to know that you've got at least two friends," said Shad.

"Friends! I used to have more friends than you could shake a stick at. They're all gone but you an' the woman. I miss her dreadful."

"I guess you ain't scared,"—this from Bony.

"Scared! By Jeedix!" Bumpy exclaimed. "A' man who has shook hands with Death as often as I have ain't apt to be nervous."

This odd reply was followed by a chortle of good-natured laughter from the cell behind the old tinker. Then out of that shadowed place came the

words, in a gentle, soothing tone: "God is love."

There was now a curious flavor of irony in the words and the laughter of Bumpy's bird.

"Assuming that you are innocent, have you any theory about the crime?" Colonel Blake asked.

"Well, sir, I have an idee, but I may be wrong. I can be purty mean, but I ain't a-goin' to say that a man done murder 'less I know what I'm talkin' about. It ain't good manners."

Bumpy reached through the bars and shook their hands.

"We're going to find the guilty man," said Shad.

"Boys, I like you—by Jeedix, I do!" Bumpy exclaimed. "But you stick to your jobs. I'm nigh the end o' the road anyhow."

That ended the interview. It was supper-time. Colonel Blake went with the boys to the railroad station. He said to Shad:

"My wife and the girl will be asking how you look and how you behaved and what you said."

"Tell 'em I'm better than my looks or behavior and don't forget that I said that I was sorry that I have to be selling kerosene and molasses in the morning."

"You're learning how to use your tongue," Colonel Blake laughed.

The boys rode to Ashfield, got their suppers at a restaurant and walked home. They were talking of the events of the day.

Bony said: "It looks awful bad for Bumpy. Do ye suppose he could have gone an' done it in a kind of crazy fit?"

"No, I don't. He is not that kind of a man."

"Seems as if he didn't care much whether they hang him or not," Bony added.

"Maybe he'll fool 'em yet. That ol' man is smart."

Shad spent the night with Bony.

Many had errands at the store to learn what had happened at the county-seat. Smithers' was a kind of clearing house for the thoughts of Amity Dam. There were a few who listened and said nothing. The people were almost unanimous in the conviction that Bumpy Brown was guilty of the murder, even those who had little knowledge of the damning evidence. In spite of their familiarity with every detail of it, the boys stood firmly for their friend. Their voices were the only ones that had a word to say in favor of the suspected man. They were openly criticized for being the friends of a murderer. Mrs. Smithers and, indeed, most of the good people of the church were shocked by their attitude .

Bony, being the satirist of the village, was unpopular among the more serious-minded people. The bearded patriarchs who snored in meeting (had he not spoken of the Sunday snoring match at the Sob Works?), the stern old maids (who reminded him of salt mackerel), and the gossiping matrons of the parish had no good opinion of Bony. Now Shad began to share the obloquy that fell upon his boon companion. The friendly attitude of the Smithers had changed. The sensitive lad began to feel it. He had lost a degree of the confidence which he had enjoyed. He knew that unpleasant things were being said of him.

Bony and Shad had gone to Ashfield together one afternoon. They had been seen in the barroom of the Westminster Hotel shoving pennies in a slot machine and smoking cigars. The truth of that matter was this: They had wandered around the streets of the big village until they were weary. They naturally felt the need of excitement. The barroom was interesting because of its odd characters and its reputation. They tried five-cent cigars. They had puffed and spat a few minutes, just as the men did. The experiment being not quite successful, they put out the cigars and stored them in their pockets. Then they tried the slot machine

and got a thrill from the reckless squandering of seven cents but nothing better. On the way home they had lighted the put-out cigars and found a grateful sense of maturity in smoking as they walked and chatted.

Moreover, one evening Miss Betsy Spenlow had gone up to her attic room where Bony lodged, and where Shad was sitting with him, and found the air blue with tobacco smoke. She had suspected them and had learned the awful truth.

These giant sins had kept the tongues of Amity Dam well exercised for weeks before the great crime had turned the current of its gossip.

It was nearing nine o'clock of a chilly November night. The usual band of murder gossipers had left the store of Ephraim Smithers. He and his young clerk were getting ready to close. Suddenly Bony Squares entered. He had been running and was breathing hard. Shad was in the front end of the store stacking some tools. Bony was excited. He whispered to his young friend.

"By Jeedix!" he exclaimed, quoting the favorite oath of old Bumpy Brown, "I've run a mile. 'Fraid I'd be too late. I've learnt a lot o' things, an' I've got to have a talk with you. Ask ol' fur-face if you can come and stay all night with me."

Always Bony had been wont to speak of the bearded Smithers as "old fur-face."

Shad knew that the request was full of danger, but he felt that he must hear what Bony had to say, even if it involved his dismissal.

He went to his employer, who was folding and stacking some disarranged dry-goods behind a counter. He asked for permission to spend the night with his friend. Mr. Smithers turned upon him with a vexed look. He never got angry.

"Do you want to lose your job?" he queried, in a tender tone.

"No, sir," Shad answered. "I am not so happy here as I was. But I—I'd hate to lose the job and your—your friendship, sir. You and Mrs. Smithers have been good to me."

"I guess we'd better settle up to-morrow," said the man. "There's a lot of talk about you an' Bony, but I haven't anything against you. I wish you well."

The return of the ring had not relieved the burden of opprobrium under which the boy labored. Both Mr. Smithers and his wife had distrusted Bumpy's story because he had refused to give the name of the guilty party. Nobody believed Bumpy Brown. Their theory was that the boy had got

scared and induced his disreputable friend to invent the story and return the ring.

Shad went with Bony to his little garret room.

"I'm glad you've quit rasslin' with spittoons an' molasses jugs and kerosene cans," said Bony. "I've got six dollars saved up. How much have you got?"

"Twenty-two dollars!" Shad answered proudly.

"We'll just hang on to it an' make it go as fur as we can. We've got a job to do for ol' Bumpy Brown. Some one is tryin' to saddle this murder on him, an' he ain't no more guilty than you an' I be—not a bit! I've been down to Ashfield an' I've got some news. First read that."

He took from his pocket a poster which he had torn from a telegraph pole in Ashfield. It said:

REWARD!

I will pay $1,000 for the conviction of the criminal who wounded my wife and killed her father.

CYRUS DOOLITTLE.

"Maybe we can make a lot o' money," Bony went on. "If we do, we'll go snucks. I'll tell ye why it ain't Bumpy Brown. You remember that man you see down the road that got over the fence an' went behind Doty's barn. That must 'a' been

about five minutes after seven. You thought, but couldn't be sure, that he wore a broad-brimmed hat. Forty minutes later Jack Labarge met a man two miles down the road in the dark. He had a broad-brimmed hat on. He was walkin' like Sam Hill towards Ashfield. He limped like Bumpy Brown. It was so dark Jack couldn't see his face. Away down just above the road that goes into the village Henry Lockwood comin' home in a hay wagon met a man wearin' a broad-brimmed hat. He was walkin' fast. He had his hat tilted sideways so Henry couldn't see his face. The moon was out then. This man didn't limp. There's a funny thing about it. He didn't limp. Henry is sure o' that. It was within half a mile of Ashfield an' 'most two mile below Bumpy's on the other side o' the river. Henry says it was a little after eight o'clock.

"They say that the Bensons' hired girl passed the same man almost in the edge o' the village a little later, but I didn't have time to look her up to-day. Do ye see how it all jibes—the time an' the broad-brimmed hat an' the fast walkin'? You see him at seven-five, about a quarter of a mile below here; at seven-forty he's two mile down the road; a little before eight he's got within a mile of Ashfield. Who was this man with the broad-brimmed hat who

left here right after the murder an' dodged you because you had a lantern an' went off the road? Why did he hide his head behind his hat brim when Henry Lockwood passed him? I say that was the murderer."

Shad was thrilled by the news that Bony gave.

In a moment they heard some one coming up the stairs. Then a rap at the door. Bony opened it. Doctor Gorse—a tall, thin, smooth-shaved, gray-haired, kindly man, stood before them. He was wise. He had a serious face and a rare understanding of electricity, microscopy, chemistry and other mysteries. He rode over the countryside repairing its physical disorders.

Every one uncovered his head before the learned doctor. These two boys had interested him. Because they needed friendship and good counsel the doctor had sought them out. He had been like a wise father to Shad. He had told his friends that these boys had good stuff in them.

He came now and put his hand on Shad's head and gave it a friendly shake. "My young friend, I heard you were here," he said. "I came over to tell you not to worry. You'll come out all right."

He had called to see Mrs. Smithers, ill with sick headache and had learned of Shad's dismissal.

"We're going to see if we can get Bumpy Brown out of his trouble," said Shad. "Some one is trying to put this murder on him."

Bony repeated to the doctor his suspicion of the man with the broad-brimmed hat and the circumstances on which it was founded.

"I'm inclined to think you are right," the doctor began.

A rather definite conviction had come to him of which he had said nothing even to his own family. "It is a curious case. I think that the officials have been misled by strong probabilities. Now in the case of an amateur, crude, bungling criminal, probabilities may lead to the truth. But when you are dealing with an able offender it is an axiom of the best procedure that you must distrust whatever is probable. It will lead you astray. I think that I know the case of the district attorney. It would seem to be strong enough to hang Bumpy Brown unless——"

The doctor paused. They waited but he sat looking downward gravely and said no more.

"What are we to do?" Shad asked.

"Thinking will solve any problem," the doctor went on. "Most people do not seem to know what their minds are made for. The smarter the criminal, the bigger the job of thinking. Remember, boys,

you're in a thinking match and perhaps with a rather deep thinker. I'll tell you what I would do. I would follow that broad-brimmed hat down the road to-morrow morning. If it was worn by the criminal, he probably hid the colored handkerchief and perhaps the hat somewhere on or near the road. Look in every hole and under every culvert. Examine the fence corners and the crevices in the stone walls. You might somewhere discover a key to the door of our mystery. Go and find that hired girl at the Bensons'. What kind of a man was it who passed her in the road that night? Did he limp? How was he dressed? Did he wear a broad-brimmed hat?"

"Supposing we found the handkerchief?" Shad asked.

"Take it to the district attorney with all the information you have been able to gather. You know Colonel Blake. There is one suggestion I would like you to make, but don't say that it comes from me. I have heard that he has the revolver and the bullets discharged in committing the crime. If this is true, tell him that you would like to know where the revolver came from. No doubt it came from some store in this part of the country. Who bought it and when?"

The doctor arose. "I have a call to make and I must be going. Good luck to you, my young friends. If I can do anything to help, let me know."

The good man left them.

"There's the greatest man I ever knew," said Bony. "He's so gol' durned smart an' kind o' solemn I'm always a little scairt when he talks to me."

Bony never wasted any of his mental gunpowder on the doctor. He was fond of him.

"If it's possible to love a man, I love him," Shad answered, but Bony never praised so lavishly.

They went to bed and lay an hour or more discussing their opinions. When they ceased talking Shad's mind was busy until midnight.

In the morning the boys set out on the familiar road to Ashfield. They went behind Doty's barn and back to the highway. They searched the thickets and culverts along that thoroughfare. Even a woodchuck hole in the siding was carefully inspected. They came to a stone wall on the east side of the highway. Shad took one side of the wall and Bony the other. They looked into every hole and crevice. They had surveyed a long stretch of wall when Bony on the side toward the fields shouted:

"Here it is!"

He leaped over the wall with the colored hand-

kerchief and a small, light-colored slouch hat in his hand. He held them up before him. There were the eye-holes in the handkerchief. A bit below them, at a point probably opposite the mouth of the man who had worn it, the colors had run together. Above them they saw evidence of the strain on the cloth resulting from its being tightly tied around the head of the murderer.

There was a touch of awe in the excitement of the two boys. Shad looked off at the river.

"This don't do Bumpy any good," he remarked. "His place is below here. He might have hid the hat and the handkerchief and then cut across to the river and got into his boat."

"But he didn't. You forgit the man in the broad-brimmed hat. He was seen away below here. I know it ain't the best place fer these things to be hid, but we can't help that. Facts is facts. The murderer went on down the road, I tell ye."

They marked the exact point in the wall where the hat and handkerchief were found. The fleeing criminal had gone to the wall, leaned over it and shoved them tightly under a flat rock on its far side. They had been so covered that neither snow nor rain could wet them.

Bony put the hat and handkerchief in his coat-

pocket. They went on down the road. Bony suggested:

"Supposin' they thought I had killed Oscar Perry an' they come an' took us up an' found this hat an' han'kerchief in my pocket."

"I guess we could prove what we were doing," Shad answered.

"I couldn't prove no allerby," said Bony. "I was down settin' on the ol' dam all 'lone studyin' astronomy an' stealin' a smoke. I heard the shots. I didn't stir 'cause I thought Deacon Meriwether was out shootin' at a 'coon in his chicken yard. He killed two 'coons there one night. I didn't come up to the store till I heard the women bawlin'. I couldn't prove no allerby."

"Well, it washes my hands. I left the Daytons at just five minutes of seven by their clock."

"Then I guess you better keep these things," said Bony as he passed them to Shad.

"I am not afraid of them," said the latter as he put them in his pockets.

They passed the Benson mansions on their way into town. They were just outside the village of Ashfield. The houses had a handsome park for a background. Sloping meadows, behind a well-built wall, lay between the road and the terraced lawns.

"You're better dressed than I be," said Bony. "Go up an' see if you can find that hired girl. Tell 'em you're a friend of ol' Bumpy Brown, the tinker, an' that you're tryin' to help him. I'll bet they know the ol' man an' his bird."

Shad dreaded the task but did not hesitate. Such grandeur as loomed before him when he neared the lawns, he had never seen. The Bensons were rich people of whose life he had heard many tales and rumors current in the countryside. There were two Benson brothers. They had come from New York, and built an estate in Ashfield. The people of that village saw little of them. Their families had intermarried.

Shad considered what he would say to those grand people. He decided first to speak of his friends, E. C. Converse and Colonel Blake. He went to the nearest of the big houses and rang the bell at its front door. A servant opened it. The boy asked for Mr. Benson. He explained that he wished to see him about Bumpy Brown. He was shown to the library, where sat one of the distinguished Benson brothers—a handsome, kindly gentleman of middle age, who was reading in a blue velvet house coat. Shad trembled with awe when the man arose and asked:

"Boy, what can I do for you?"

The tone of the man's voice was reassuring. Shad had learned that a gentleman was welcome anywhere.

"My name is Shad Morryson," he said as he stood bending the visor of his cap in his nervous hands. "I am a gentleman, sir, at least I try to be."

"Good! I believe it," said the man with a smile of conviction and amusement.

"I am a friend of E. C. Converse, sir, and of Colonel Blake."

"Good! I know them both. That establishes your standing."

Shad was getting better control of his breath. He made a new start.

"I have been working in the store up at Amity Dam. I know Bumpy Brown. He has been arrested for the murder of Oscar Perry."

"The man with the wonderful bird! He mends our pots and pans. An amusing old fellow! What do you know about him?"

"He is not guilty, sir."

"Good! I'd like to agree with you. Give me your reasons."

Mr. Benson was now deeply interested.

"I met the guilty man in the road that night.

Two men saw him. He wore a broad-brimmed hat. He was walking fast on the road to Ashfield. He hid this hat an' han'kerchief in the stone wall beside the road."

Mr. Benson spread out the handkerchief and carefully examined it.

"When did you find them?" he asked.

"To-day, sir."

"You must give them to Colonel Blake."

"I'm going to."

"Until you see him, don't show them to any one. Don't let them go out of your hands."

Shad was now at the point he sought.

"I hear that your hired girl met the man down in the road beyond your gate."

Mr. Benson smiled as he rang a bell on the table near him. The butler came. His master spoke:

"Tell the maid, Celestia More, to come here."

A cheery-faced young Irish woman, with sleeves rolled up, came from the kitchen. She had been visiting down near the bridge in the edge of the village, the evening of the murder. She started for home a little after eight. It was dark and she was timid. Her friend came with her. They entered the road beyond the turn that leads to the village. A man approached them in the darkness. He was

walking fast. He passed them on the opposite side of the road. He was tall. He wore a cap. She and her friend both agreed that he wore a cap.

"A cap!" Shad exclaimed. "I see. He was getting near the village. He had the cap in his pocket. Up the road within half a mile, we're going to find the broad-brimmed hat. He hid it somewhere."

Mr. Benson laughed.

"You're a real detective," he said.

"Well, sir, the old man has no friends. Somebody has got to help or he'll be hung."

"You're a good-hearted boy and rather level-headed. I wish you luck. I have not been able to believe that the old tinker was guilty."

Shad rejoined Bony who was waiting for him on the road. Within an hour the boys had found the broad-brimmed hat. It had been crowded into a hollow stump beside the road and was covered with rotten wood. Elated, they hastened into the village.

"We'll go over to Canton and see Colonel Blake," Shad proposed.

They went to the Westminster Hotel and learned that the next train going west left at six-forty. They decided to telephone and learn if the colonel were at home. They learned that he had

gone to Kildare Pond hunting. The trail was ten miles above South Bolton up the Racquette. At Mose St. Germain's house in the edge of the clearing they could learn how to reach the trail. The pond was about five miles back in the woods.

They went to a store. Shad got some paper and twine and wrapped the hats and handkerchief in a snug package and tied it to his belt.

"I'm hungry," said Shad. "Let's get our suppers and walk home and have a talk with the doctor."

When they came out of the supper room a number of men sat around the fireplace. They were talking of the murder at Amity Dam. Among them were Robert Royce, Ellery Anderson, James Evarts, a commercial traveler, the proprietor of the hotel and a stranger of about thirty, rather shabbily dressed. The stranger had red hair, a freckled face and abnormally large ears. Anderson had spoken of the excellent work of the district attorney in promptly solving the problem.

Bony took up the cudgels for Bumpy Brown.

"The problem ain't solved yet," said he. "I happen to know that they're barking up the wrong tree."

These village gossipers looked with amused astonishment at the boy.

"Huh! You must be a rather smart boy," said the hotel man.

"No, but where there's so many that do all their work with their tongues a feller that uses his brain once in a while kind o' stands out. The game was put up on Bumpy Brown. He was a drunken ol' pup of a man. Nobody supposed that he had any friends. He hated the Doolittles. He lived all alone a mile from anybody else. It would be hard fer him to prove an allerby. The man that done the shootin' put on that limp. He wore a slouch hat in Mr. Doolittle's house and a broad-brimmed hat when he was runnin' away."

With the rashness of youth Bony told of the different points in the road where the man with the broad-brimmed hat had been seen in the darkness escaping toward Ashfield. He spoke of the timing of his appearances here and there which corresponded with the speed of a rapid walker. Down within a mile of Ashfield he had ceased to limp. A mile below Amity Dam he had hidden the colored handkerchief which had masked his face and the slouch hat in a stone wall. Half a mile out of Ashfield he shoved the broad-brimmed hat in the hollow of an old stump and put a cap on his head. In the edge of the village he was wearing the cap.

Tense with interest, every one was leaning forward in his chair gazing at the boy. The landlord was first to speak, asking:

"How do you know he hid the handkerchief and the hats?"

"We found them to-day."

"Where are they?"

"We've got 'em."

"Let us have a look at them."

"No sir-ee. We ain't goin' to show 'em to nobody till we see the district attorney. He's up at Kildare Pond huntin' deer. One of us is goin' up there to-morrow to find him."

The two boys put on their caps and overcoats and rubbers, while the group of men were discussing what Bony had said. There was a tone of incredulity in some of their voices. A bit nettled by this, the young satirist approached them and emptied his mind in the manner of a rash, honest, hot-headed youth:

"We're goin' to find out where the hats an' the han'kerchief come from an' who got 'em. We're goin' to find out where the revolver come from an' who got it. We're goin' to win that thousan'-dollar reward, an' you can bet your lives that it will not be Bumpy Brown that's convicted."

They paid their bill at the desk, went out-of-doors and hastened toward the bridge. The night was dark. It was fortunate for them that a team going out to a point above Amity Dam overtook them on the island. Its driver asked them to ride.

The tavern gossips of Ashfield had something new to talk about. Mr. Evarts said that he thought that the boy had told the truth. The drummer was also of that opinion.

"He's a notorious young liar," said Robert Royce. "There isn't a lazier an' more harum-scarum chap in this county."

In a few minutes he and Ellery Anderson and the stranger arose and put on their great-coats and went over to the Kensington barroom.

When the boys arrived in Amity Dam they saw a light in the study windows of the doctor. They rang his door-bell. The doctor gave them a hearty welcome. They told him of their success.

"We have made quite a step toward the truth," said the doctor. "Shad will go into the woods to take these things to Colonel Blake to-morrow?"

"Yes, sir," was Shad's answer.

The doctor scratched his head, well covered with gray hair, thoughtfully.

"Well, if I were you, I wouldn't talk to any one

of your plans and discoveries. A good detective never blabs about what he is doing."

Bony had blabbed and had a secret conviction of his folly and now he lacked the moral courage to speak of it. The boys held their peace.

"I suggest that you leave those things in my care," said the doctor.

"I want to take them with me," Shad answered.

"I advise against it, but you are entitled to have your way. It occurs to me that Hubbard's store has become a point of some interest. There you will remember Bumpy bought his rubbers. It may be—it just may be that the murderer had a confederate in that store—an unconscious confederate if not a real one. I wonder if somebody had learned of the exact shape and size of the rubbers Bumpy had bought. You know rubbers are rather accommodating. They stretch. Suggest to the district attorney that he go to Hubbard's store and find out, if he can, who bought rubbers of that size and shape on or before the tenth of November. People do not forget Bumpy's calls. He is a quaint unusual type of man who has his own way of talking. They'll be sure to remember all about the rubbers they sold him."

The doctor walked with the boys to Miss Spenlow's house and left them at the door.

CHAPTER VIII

IN WHICH THE MYSTERY DEEPENS AND SHAD ENCOUNTERS AN UNEXPECTED PERIL

MISS SPENLOW was a lady of undoubted probity. Her notion was that the Flesh and the Devil were conquering the world. The wildness of the quiet village of Amity Dam worried her. She was an active local worker for the Home for the Friendless in Ashfield. She served on a committee of the Home with one of the Benson sisters. The Home and the sayings of Miss Benson was the main topic of her conversation.

"Come, let's go over an' hear about the Home for the Friendless," Bony used to say when he invited Shad to go there for a meal with him. "Be careful to git yer finger-nails clean or you'll feel friendless enough before you leave the table."

Miss Spenlow had a deep distrust of men and boys. Yet she accepted them as a necessary evil. She did her best to put up with their follies, but

under protest. She was the only lady in the village who took boarders. Her south window was decorated all winter with sweet-scented geraniums, her favorite plant. She had agreed to take Shad at four dollars a week if he would sleep with Bony "and promise to be a good boy." She had no notion that he would keep his promise, but watching him would add to the zest and interest of her life. It gave her a fruitful topic of conversation with her bosom friend, Elizabeth Meriwether. Moreover, therein was a secret which she kept even from herself. She rather enjoyed the mothering and correcting and bullying of these two boys. She was often threatening to send them away, but she would have wept if they had left her. She had a curious interest in their talk and perversity.

When they entered the hall that evening she came close to them and sniffed.

"Lord! What an odor of tobacco smoke!" she exclaimed.

She gave Shad a searching look, came closer and sniffed again.

"Remember, you boys have got to behave," she warned them. "I hate to have you coming in late."

They started up the stairs. Her kind motherly soul began to soften.

"Have you had your suppers?" she asked in a tone of relented scorn.

"Yes," Bony answered.

"I guess you better put an extra cover on your bed—it's so cold," she called.

"The ol' breath-smeller!" Bony exclaimed as he lighted his lamp and closed the door. "She never had no fun in her life."

"She's very good-hearted," was Shad's opinion.

"She's too good. She plays safe. I heard her say once that she thought croquet was a dangerous game. 'Suppose some one got hit in the limb with one o' them horrid mallets!' she said. If she had her way, there wouldn't be no beer er whisky er tobacco er cards er dancin' er baseball er croquet. I guess she'd cut out the hammers an' saws an' axes 'cause ye might hurt yerself with 'em. An' you bet yer life she wouldn't have no huggin' er kissin' er love-makin'. Gosh! What a lot of sweet-scented geraniums we would be!"

They were weary and soon asleep. Shad was up at six. He got his breakfast, then put some clothing in Bony's small pack basket. He was ready to take the stage going south at seven o'clock. Miss Spenlow insisted that he take his sweater, a package of doughnuts, some cheese and a piece of apple pie.

The sun shone warm out of a clear sky before eight o'clock. It softened the surface of the frozen road and improved the wheeling. They reached South Bolton, the end of the stage line, at eleven o'clock. Shad went to Hubbard's store. At a desk behind the counter, posting books, sat a well-dressed young lady. She turned from her task as the boy entered. Immediately Shad recognized her. She was the girl whom he and Bony had seen at the door of Bumpy's shack one Sunday—the girl with the haughty manner, the handsome eyes and the glowing red cheeks. He and Bony had often spoken of her. She was much stouter than she had been.

"Good morning!" she said with no change in her countenance. "What can I do for you?"

"I believe you know Bumpy Brown," Shad began.

"Well, what if I do?" she answered coldly.

Shad told of his purpose. She laughed in the unemotional fashion of Bumpy's parrot, and asked:

"Do you think that we can remember the numbers of all the rubbers we sell and the names of the men that buy them? That's impossible."

Many things were impossible in South Bolton. It was a little hamlet in the edge of the big woods.

There were no more than forty or fifty people living in its huddle of small houses. Hubbard's store got its trade largely from the lumber camps above. To-day there was not a sign of human life in its streets and the store was deserted.

"You're a good-looking boy," said the girl. "Where are you going?"

"Into the woods above Mose St. Germain's."

"Why don't you stop here a while? We're going to have a dance and a party at our house."

The girl had dropped her cold and haughty manner. There was that in her tone which seemed to indicate that she really wanted to get acquainted with him. To Shad she looked very beautiful.

"I'm sorry, but I have to see a man who is at Kildare Pond to-day," he said. "Is there a livery stable in the place?"

"Yes. It's just across the street."

"I'll run over there a minute," he said as he left her.

Shad made a bargain with the livery man to drive him to Mose St. Germain's immediately after dinner. He returned to Hubbard's store. The girl now looked sad.

"I think that you have been crying," said the frank boy.

"Yes, there's a lot of crying here among the women—it's so lonesome," she said. "You get the habit. It's awful to live here in the woods."

"I know what it is. I've lived in the woods myself. I'm sorry for you."

Shad sat down there and ate a part of his luncheon. She put many queries. In answer to one he confessed playfully:

"I intend to be a lawyer—like Colonel Blake of Canton—and live in a big village and smoke ten-cent cigars."

She laughed. "Boys have a better chance than girls do," she said. "They have to put up with what they can get an' make the best of it if they're poor."

The horse and buggy arrived and Shad set out with the livery man on a ten-mile ride up the sand plains to the house of Mose St. Germain. The famous guide was at home. He had come out from his camp on Kildare that morning to his farm in the edge of the clearing for butter, salt pork and a baking of bread. He had left Colonel Blake and Judge Swift in the woods. They were hunting.

"You can start right away purty quick," Mose said. "Got to be I wait for my wife bake de bread. I start late. Go fas' like buck deer."

He drew a diagram of the trail for Shad to take

with him. This is a reproduction of it, save the names:

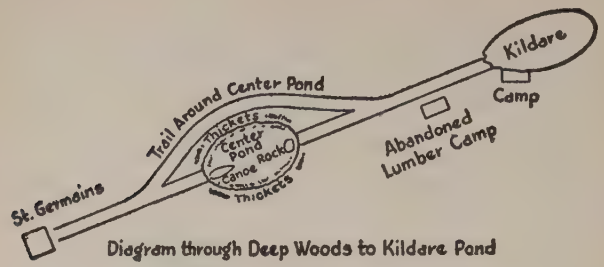


Diagram through Deep Woods to Kildare Pond

He told the boy to go straight to Center Pond where he would find St. Germain's canoe. Then he was to cross to a big rock in the far edge of the pond beyond which he would find the trail to Kildare. He, Mose, would take the long trail around the pond.

Shad set out on the much traveled trail through the deep woods, leading over steep hills and down into wet valleys. As he walked clouds came up out of the west and covered the sky above him. He could hear distant thunder. Center Pond was the bottom of a deep cut in the hills. It was almost round. Its sloping shores were covered by evergreen thickets of pine, spruce and tamarack. Shad found the waiting canoe and could see the rock of which Mose had spoken, about a quarter of a mile away on the far shore. His treasures, wrapped in

his sweater, were now in the pack basket. This he deposited in the bow. A skilful paddler, he pushed through a border of lily-pads and out into the clear water.

He was well beyond the middle of the pond when a shot from the shore behind him shattered the silence of the deep vale and filled it with echoes. Shad jumped. A bullet had whizzed by his head and struck the water beyond him, and ricochetted on its surface. It had come from some point on the shore he had left a bit east of him.

A thought flashed through his brain. He flung his feet over the stern and dropped into the water, and none too quickly. Another ball had whizzed through the air above him, in a rush of sound. The canoe had sheered away as he went overboard. He dove and swam to its side. Reaching up, he seized the gunwale, and, keeping the canoe between him and the direction whence the shot had come, swam with his free arm. The shooting ceased. The man whose rifle had been aimed at him was no doubt seeking a more favorable point of attack. Shad, with the skill of a lad whose cradle, one may almost say, had been a canoe in water, made swifter progress than his enemy had thought possible. He got beyond the rock and ashore, seized his pack basket

and crept into the thicket, dragging it beside him. Now covered, he arose, thrust his arms through the basket straps and ran.

The sky was dark, a high wind was roaring through the forest and shaking the treetops. As he ran the dusky woods were illumined by lightning flashes and noisy with echoing thunder and whirling blasts of wind. In distant places he could hear the crash of great trees tumbling into their neighbors.

A storm in the forest creates a pandemonium like that of artillery fire. The boy had heard it before. He was about a mile and a half from Center Pond when he came to the abandoned lumber camp on Mose St. Germain's chart. It stood in a little clearing. His clothes, drained and warmed by his exercise, were beginning to dry. The first drops of a cold rain were falling. It increased so rapidly that Shad sought the cover of the old camp. He hated to get wet again.

Night was coming on. He could just dimly see the outlines of the log structure. He knew that its roof, covered with tar-paper, would protect him. It did. In a moment the air seemed to be filled with the downpour of cold water. He had entered the old doorway in the front of the camp. When such

a structure is abandoned, its doors and windows are moved to a new one.

Shad stood by one of the window embrasures looking out at the storm. The rain turned to sleet and stopped suddenly. The clouds passed. The moon was peering through the treetops in the east. Shad had stepped toward the door ready to go on his way, when he saw a man with a rifle on his shoulder stealthily approaching the camp. For a breath or two he stood looking out at this figure moving slowly toward him. He seemed a man of prodigious size—bigger than any one Shad knew. The boy's heart beat fast. The stranger crossed a wide path of moonlight that cut the shadows. As he did so Shad observed that his face was covered with a handkerchief. The man was entering the doorway when Shad leaped through a window opening in the rear of the shack and ran.

A conviction had come to the boy that here was the man who had been shooting at him. Else why did he cover his face? Shad reached the trail and ran like a scared deer. He was soon at his destination a mile or so farther on. He felt sure, and with good reason, that he had seen the murderer of Oscar Perry.

CHAPTER IX

THE ROBBERS AND THE REVOLVER

WHEN Shad arrived Mose St. Germain, who had reached Kildare Pond before the storm began, was serving supper in a comfortable log camp to Colonel Blake and Judge Swift. Its one lower room was filled with a genial warmth from a blazing fire in the cook stove. The party had been worried by the tardiness of the boy. Mose was about to go out on the trail with a lantern in quest of him.

"I'm wet," said Shad as he went and stood by the stove. "I had to do some swimming and there was a lot of water in the bushes."

"Come right up-stairs. I've plenty of clothes for you," said Colonel Blake.

Soon Shad was seated at the supper table in dry clothing, and slippers.

"Tell us what happened to you and why you are here," said Colonel Blake.

Shad began at the high point in his adventures:

"Somebody shot at me when I was out on Center Pond. The bullet almost took the end off my nose. I was scairt. I slipped out into the water. Another bullet whizzed above me. I got the slant of 'em when they hit the water. I knew about where the shooting came from. I made for the canoe and hid myself behind it and towed it ashore. I ran up the trail like a scared buck. I knew why that man was shoving lead at me. He wanted to get me an' the things in that pack basket before I could see you."

"What have you got there?" the colonel asked.

"First you'll have to hear some talking," Shad began.

He told of what he and Bony had learned of the man under the broad-brimmed hat hastening down the road to Ashfield; of their searching for and finding the hidden handkerchief and hats; of the group of men at the Westminster Hotel and of Bony's boastful words in their presence; of Doctor Gorse's suggestions regarding the revolver and the rubbers; of the big man who followed him to the lumber camp.

Shad proudly unwrapped the packages in his basket and laid them before the astonished officers of the law. Colonel Blake drew a chart of the road

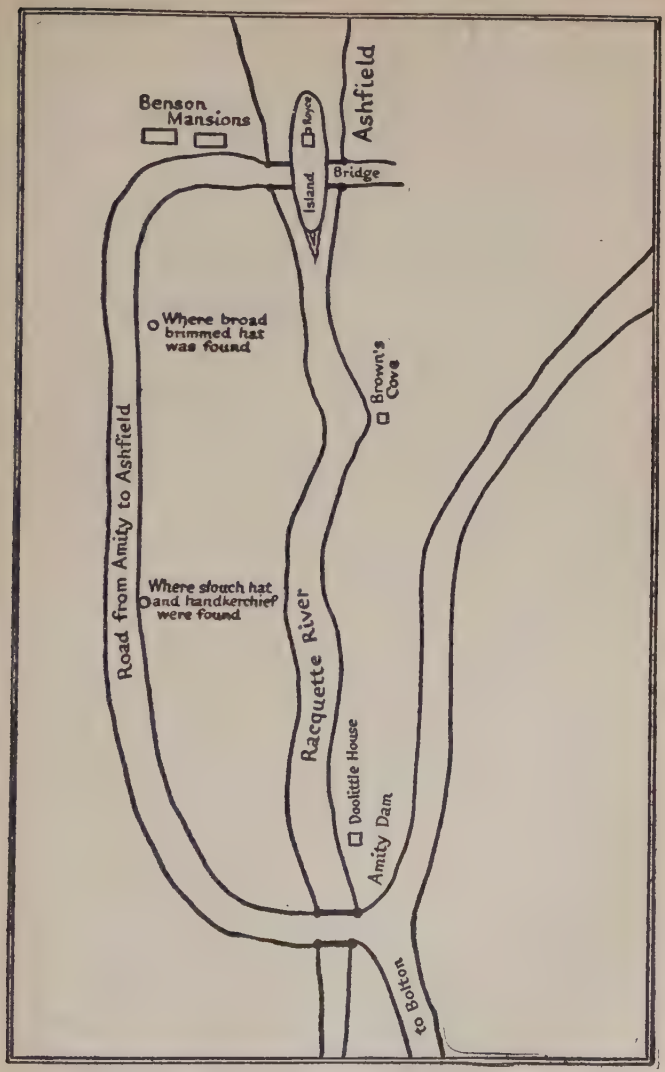
and river from Ashfield to Amity Dam, reproduced herewith, and with Shad's help located Brown's Cove and the points where the hats and the handkerchief were found.

While Shad was eating his venison steak and baked potatoes, the judge and district attorney were discussing the new evidence. Looking at the chart the judge said: "The handkerchief and slouch hat were found where Brown might have hidden them in going to his boat. We must keep Brown's motive in mind."

"Yes, but I have not been quite satisfied with Brown's motive," said the district attorney. "So far the Jekyll and Hyde theory has had no confirmation. The sheriff's reports and my own observation and the evidence of this boy indicate that he is a harmless and lovable old chap of a rather admirable spirit."

Shad told the story of the missing ring. He added: "That's why I am here."

"Well, boy, your heart and your work are a credit to you," said the colonel. "You have faced me around. Judge, this is no such easy problem as we thought. We have to look for a deeper man than the tinker and a deeper motive than mere resentment."


Benson Mansions
Ashfield
Bridge
Island
Where broad brimmed hat was found
Brown's Cove
Road from Amity to Ashfield
Where slouch hat and handkerchief were found
Racquette River
Doolittle House
Amity Dam
to Bolton

"This shooting on Center Pond, this big man whom Shad saw approaching in the moonlit darkness around the old lumber camp are no help to us," the judge argued. "The woods are full of hunters. I knew a man who was killed in a canoe by accident exactly as this boy might have been killed. The deer was between the rifle muzzle and him. The man outside the old camp was doubtless a benighted hunter."

The colonel answered: "It is extremely improbable that two bullets could have been aimed directly at the boy by accident. Again, if the man at the old lumber camp was a benighted hunter, why has he not shown up here? He came out of the trail from Center Pond. It leads directly to food and shelter in this camp."

The judge asked: "Assume that he was trying to kill the boy, why would he have followed him to the old lumber camp? After circling the pond he would have known that he was too far behind the boy to catch him."

"Yes, but he may have thought that Shad was wounded and losing blood and going slowly or lying dead in the trail. If he saw him topple out of the canoe it would have been his natural inference that he had hit his mark. I do not like this touch of

mystery. Some one seems to see in one or more of these three articles a source of danger for himself. They were put away in the rush and excitement of the fleeing criminal and as soon as it could be safely done, some dark night, they were to be gathered up and destroyed or perhaps hidden somewhere near the shack of Bumpy Brown. You know, the thought has come to me more than once that the revolver and cartridges were planted on the old man."

"These are interesting speculations, but they do not impress me," said the judge. "The big man our young friend saw may have got his bearings and gone to his camp or he may be coming here any minute and telling of his adventure near Center Pond."

Shad, busy with his venison steak and baked potatoes, had listened with deep interest to the judge's arguments. He enjoyed having in his mind a fact which would shatter them. In the moment of silence that followed the judge's words he spoke out:

"He'll never come here. He is the murderer. He knows that I know it."

Shad told them of that moment near the abandoned camp when the moonlight had shown him a masked face.

"And did he not call out when he heard you running away?"

"No, sir," Shad answered.

"That is rather strange business," said the judge. "Why did he mask himself?"

"It was a cunning bit of prudence," the colonel answered. "Suppose he had come upon the boy lying wounded in the trail. The stranger could then have robbed him of his treasures without being identified. Again there was a possibility that the boy would be hiding and watching the trail before darkness settled down.

"Or, again, after dark, a light might be flashed in his face any moment. That indeed is what happened. A sudden light out of the heavens fell upon him. Shad is not much wiser because of it. That beam of moonlight showed us only the blackness of the man's soul."

"It is a reasonable theory," the judge agreed.

They sat smoking. The colonel was examining the two hats which Shad had brought in his basket. Suddenly he whistled and exclaimed: "Well! What does this mean? Look here, Judge."

Inside the sweat band of the light-colored slouch hat some one had written with pen and ink these words:

"To R. R.: It's a long head that never turns."

"This is undoubtedly the hat worn by the mur-

derer," said the colonel. "All who saw him agree as to the kind of hat he wore, and it was found with the handkerchief. This writing is that of a young woman accustomed to the use of a pen. She was a playful person of some sort. Who is she and who is R. R.?"

"Robert Royce, maybe," Shad promptly answered.

"Sure enough! There are the two *R*'s," said the colonel. "He was a son of Mrs. Doolittle by her first husband. He is tall. I remember that he swore at the examination that he closed his shop at five o'clock and went up-stairs to read. He came down-stairs and let Cyrus Doolittle out of his front door soon after eight. He would have had three hours in which to go to Amity Dam, commit the crime and return to his shop."

"It is quite possible," said the judge. "Royce is fairly tall, but he is not so big as the man this boy describes."

"No, but all men look big in moonlight," the colonel answered.

He carefully wrapped the articles which he had been examining, and added: "I shall take good care of these things and go out of the woods to-morrow."

He took Shad's hand and spoke these words,

which mark a turning point in the career of Sheridan Morryson:

"Pard, I like you. I'm going to take you into my office if you don't mind, and try to make a lawyer of you. If you're kind to me and willing to bear with my shortcomings, I guess we can get along together. I want you to go to bed now and get a good rest. You must be tired."

He bolted the door and put braces in the windows. The two men and the boy went to their beds above stairs. Shad observed that the colonel put the package under his pillow. The boy had been much elated by the colonel's words. He pondered over them after he had gone to bed.

"I guess that Mrs. Blake will find out that I'm no baby," he said to himself.

The morning was chilly and the clouds were threatening. The party set out with rifles and loaded packs soon after eight. The trusty old guide led them. As they neared the abandoned lumber camp, Colonel Blake said to the guide:

"I'll take the lead here."

He walked slowly, looking intently at the ground. In a wet spot near a deep puddle he stopped, saying:

"Here are Shad's tracks and here are the tracks

of the man who followed him coming and going. He wore hunting boots."

The colonel took a rule from his pocket and measured the tracks, the judge noting the figures.

"By jove!" the latter exclaimed. "They are almost identical with those of the rubber tracks of the murderer. The differences are slight, due no doubt to the peculiar shaping of the boot-sole. I am convinced that this man could have worn Bumpy's rubbers."

"Yes, we're in deeper water than we thought," the colonel remarked as he folded his rule.

They followed the foot-prints to the very edge of Center Pond. The canoe was gone. They could dimly see it on the far shore.

"He went out of the woods last night and was in a hurry," said the colonel.

They turned back, crossed to the long trail around Center Pond and made for the clearing. Half a mile or so back of St. Germain's cabin the tracks of the stranger were no longer visible. At some point, which they did not discover, he had left the trail.

Shad and the two officials tramped over the lonely sand road to South Bolton. About two miles below St. Germain's they saw where a team and

wagon had come off the plain into the road and gone on toward the settlement some time before.

At South Bolton they went to Hubbard's store. Shad had told Colonel Blake of the attractive young lady whom he had once seen at Bumpy Brown's shack and who worked in that store. Mr. Hubbard was on duty there. The young woman had gone to Ashfield that morning on the stage to do some shopping. She would be returning the next day.

"Who is this young woman and where is her home?" Colonel Blake inquired of the merchant.

"She is from Malone," the latter answered. "Her name is Caroline De Long. Robert Royce introduced her to me in Ashfield one day about a year ago. He had known her and her people in Malone. She said that she was not very well; that she had heard that South Bolton was a healthy place near the edge of the big woods and that she would like to work in my store. I needed help, as I have to travel about from camp to camp in the woods and my wife has all she can do with the housework and the children. So I took her to work here in the store."

"Have you been pleased with her?"

"Well, yes—pretty well on the whole. I've found her honest and good at figures. She keeps the books in fine shape and can write a good business letter."

"I have heard that she is very handsome and that she dresses well," Colonel Blake went on.

"Yes, she's as proud as a peacock, and my wife thinks that she dresses too well for a girl who has to work for a living and that she gads around too much. I guess maybe women are apt to be a little hard on each other."

"Who does she gad around with?"

"Well, mostly Robert Royce. He comes up here often of a Sunday with a nice pair of hosses and takes her out riding. I don't know as we can complain of that. Royce is a single man and I kind o' think he's fond of her."

"Do you happen to know old Bumpy Brown, the tinker who lives down on the Racquette?"

"Oh, everybody knows him! They think that he's the man who done the shooting down to Doolittle's."

"Does Miss De Long know him?"

"Yes, and we've all been wondering about that. He was up here tinkering. He came to the store to see Carrie. They seemed to be well acquainted. He said that he knew her people. The last time he was here Carrie spent the evening with him on the hotel piazza. My wife thinks that he gives her money."

"What does she say about his indictment?"

"She says that he is a harmless old man who wouldn't hurt anybody."

"You will remember that Bumpy bought a pair of rubbers here a few days before the murder. Who sold them to him?"

"Miss De Long."

"Who bought rubbers of the same size about that time?"

"I've been thinking about that. You know, Robert Royce came in the day after the tinker was here. Another man was with Royce. I didn't know him. They were going into the woods. The stranger bought a rain-coat. They went over to the hotel for their dinner. Later Royce came back in a hurry. He wanted arctic overshoes. He had on a pair of new rubbers. I knew that he had bought 'em over at the other store. He said that they pinched his feet. I took them off. The size mark was on the sole. It was the exact size and shape of the pair that I sold to Bumpy Brown. I thought of it when I heard about the rubber tracks of the murderer."

The colonel asked: "Did Royce see Miss De Long while he was here?"

"Yes. They had a little private talk together."

"Will you describe the man you call the stranger?"

"He was a tall man with a freckled face and red hair and very big ears."

This ended the conversation with Hubbard. Shad, the colonel and the judge had ordered dinner at the small village inn. A messenger had come to the store to tell them it was ready.

"I am more than ever convinced that we have been misled and that Bumpy is not in the case," said Colonel Blake as they sat down at the table.

"A little more evidence will make me agree with you," was the answer of the judge. "I happen to know that Royce has a motive."

"It would so appear. What is the motive?"

"I drew the will of his mother, who, as you know, is Mrs. Doolittle. She leaves all her property—a considerable sum—to her son Robert Royce."

The colonel's face grew serious.

"You will remember from his testimony at Brown's examination that he has no alibi. We had better say no more of this until the ground under our feet is a little more solid. Remember, Shad, you mustn't know too much. Keep still till we have found our way."

Shad promised to hold his tongue but he could hardly conceal his elation over the clearing outlook for his friend the tinker.

"There is one circumstance that must give us pause," said the judge. "The murderer did not seem to be eager to kill Mrs. Doolittle. True, he shot at her, but, entering as he did, he had to begin shooting at once and create a panic. He couldn't hesitate then. A few seconds later he had his chance to kill Mrs. Doolittle. He stood close in front of her with the revolver pointing at her face. He could have killed her then but he didn't shoot. He struck her. She fell and fled out of his way."

"Consider the psychological situation," the colonel began. "She was his mother. Apart from her he could plan her death but, face to face with the woman who had borne him, he weakened. His soul rebelled. He could not pull the trigger. He would have been glad to get out of the house without killing but he couldn't."

"Yes, all that is possible," the judge answered. "The mind of a murderer is like the bottom of the sea. We can not know much about it."

"Well, we shall all be wiser in a week," the colonel remarked as they arose from the table.

They hired a team at the livery stable and set out for Ashfield and the county-seat. As they rode through the hill country Shad told the great men of his remarkable friend Bony and of the able work he

had done for Bumpy Brown. He repeated certain of Bony's odd sayings.

"I want to meet your friend," said the colonel. "We'll have him come over to spend Christmas with us. I like boys who can make people know that they're alive—without much hollering. You two boys have done it."

They stopped at Amity Dam to pick up Shad's clothing, then at the home of the judge in Ashfield. The colonel was urged to spend the night there.

"No, thank you," he answered. "Shad and I have got some business to do in the village before we take the evening train to Canton."

They left their baggage at the Westminster Hotel and discharged the team. They went to Royce's shop on the island. Royce was not there.

On the street a tradesman stopped them with interesting news. While fishing he had found a tan coat and overalls on the river shore below the bridge. The colonel went to his store and took possession of them. It was undoubtedly the suit worn by the murderer.

"Do you know whom it belongs to?" the colonel asked.

"No," was the answer. "They say Robert Royce wore a suit like that when he worked in his barn."

CHAPTER X

THE WONDERFUL GIRL AND THE "WONDERFUL WOMAN"

THEY were out on the street when Colonel Blake said to his young friend:

"Pard, we have two hours before train time. You know, of course, that clothes are an important part of life on this planet. Your grand new suit has been swum in. Its pristine purity has departed. The cruel rusticity of Amity Dam is on you. Come with me and I will complete your emancipation."

Shad followed the district attorney, smiling but not quite sure of the meaning of all this. They went to a clothing store.

"Here, sir, is a young friend of mine," Colonel Blake said to the genial clerk. "I wish you to deprive him of this Amity Damned appearance. Let us hurl economy to the winds and go to work."

New clothes, shirts, collars, neckties, underclothing, a derby hat and a leather suitcase were care-

fully selected. When they left the store the colonel surveyed the boy with admiration.

"It is a perfect job," he said. "Send the bill to me."

They got new shoes at another store and went to a barber shop. There the colonel was shaved. He insisted that Shad have a trimming and a bath and fresh underclothing. When they entered the colonel's house about seven-thirty that evening Shad was stepping proudly. Mrs. Blake embraced him and said that he was handsomer than ever. The girl Ruth shook his hand.

"I am to be kind but dignified to you," she said with a smile.

"When I come again I think that I will wear green glasses," the boy answered.

"Why?"

"They will give you a kind of a sickly look and make it easier for me to behave."

The colonel and Mrs. Blake laughed, betraying a note of awareness.

The colonel suggested:

"Put on a pair of magnifiers. They would make her look like the fat lady in a side-show."

"If you do that I'll hide when I see you coming," said Ruth.

The girl sat down and began to survey the boy. She was impressed by his grandeur. She was revising her assessment, already large, of his personal value. He thought that she was more beautiful than ever, and he was right.

"This boy has done important work in the case of the People against Brown," the colonel said to his wife. "He and a young friend have found the hat and handkerchief that covered the head and face of the murderer. He has discovered other convincing evidence. I am going to try to make a lawyer of him. It ought to be easy. This young chap has almost convinced me that his friend Bumpy Brown is not the man we want."

He told his wife of Shad's finds and adventures.

Mrs. Blake embraced the boy and congratulated him.

"You really are getting along," she said.

"Reddy" Cornell—a handsome boy of about Shad's age—called to play cards with Ruth. The girl welcomed him with joy. Her smiles were not fairly distributed. Most of them were for the newcomer. The look of melancholy depression in the face of the handsome lad from Amity Dam filled her with a strange delight not unmingled with pity. It was the unconscious strategy of youth. Shad

began to think that life was nothing but a desert waste.

The colonel was weary. He arose presently and suggested to his young friend that they go to bed. Shad had begun to feel the reaction of his hard travel and exciting adventures. He arose and said good night. The girl gave him a pleasant smile as she answered. He thought that he saw a note of disappointment in her eyes. The girl went with him to the foot of the stairs and whispered with sweet encouragement in her eyes:

"How grand you look!"

Her gentleness aroused in him a kind of smothered indignation. He went up-stairs with the colonel who showed him to his room.

"I don't like that boy," he said to himself as he was undressing. He was jealous. It relieved him some, after he had gone to bed, to fight an imaginary duel in which his rival was slain.

He had a wakeful and unhappy night but he had forgotten all that when, after sleeping late, he came down-stairs at eight o'clock in the morning and Ruth met him in the hall and looked into his eyes with a sweet smile as she said:

"How lazy you are! I've been up an hour waiting for you."

He was happy again as he stammered, rather awkwardly: "If—if I had known that I would have been up at daylight."

"Boys don't know much," she answered with a sigh. "How is your old glass eye?"

"I don't carry it these days," he said. "I look for luck only in your eyes."

"What kind of luck?"

"The kind your mother could give me."

"Aren't you willing to cheat a little?"

"If I were I'd be kissing you now."

"I do not like you," said the girl, stamping her foot impatiently. "I'm going to have another beau."

"Good luck to you. It is what I expected."

Ruth blushed, saying: "I have got to hurry away to school now."

It was not quite true but it was a part of the old strategy. She knew that it would pain him to see her go and there was a kind of joy in the thought of his bitter and devastating disappointment. So she left him. Before she had gone a block she pretended to have forgotten something and came back and shook hands again.

Shad went with the colonel to his office. That day the boy was comfortably settled in a furnished room in Angel Alley, so called because its only shop

was devoted to the manufacture of marble monuments. A marble angel had stood by its door for generations. Shad's wages were to be twenty-five dollars a month. He was to get his meals at a small restaurant. It was a speculation on the part of the generous lawyer—like that of putting a colt in a training stable. The boy was quick to learn. Moreover, he had a mind of his own, and agreeable manners.

Mrs. Blake invited the boy to dinner. He answered with a letter in which he wrote:

"Going to your house is, I think, like going to heaven. Still for a little while I'm afraid to enter your door. Do you remember that song that Ruth was singing the other day and what the man said to the boys around the monkey's cage? I've got to keep my word to you. How am I to do it if Ruth is near me and I am looking into her eyes? I think that I had better content myself for a while with seeing her in my dreams. That is very often and far from enough, but I am growing older every day. I'd like to wake up some morning and find myself a year up the road. I am a poor boy without much to recommend me and your kindness is like bread when I am hungry. I thank you for it."

The letter relieved the romantic energy of his heart with grateful exercise. It aroused in Mrs. Blake a keen sympathy for the lonely young martyr

of Angel Alley. She sent much dainty food to his lodgings. Still he was in no great need of her sympathy or her favors.

The country was now at war with Spain. A messenger came one day from the War Department to consult the colonel. It was then that Shad learned that Colonel Blake was an acknowledged authority in devising and reading cipher messages used in war.

The revolver had suddenly become an item of great importance in the case of the People against Brown. Soon the colonel resolved to take it to the experts in New York City. There facts of vital interest were discovered regarding the weapon used in the killing of Oscar Perry. The brief of Colonel Blake submitted to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court recites the testimony of Sergeant William E. Petty of the Twenty-eighth Precinct, an expert on revolvers and ammunition, who examined the weapon. He weighed its bullets and counted their grooves.

He said: "This revolver was called in its time the American Bulldog Thirty-eight. It was manufactured by the Winchester Repeating Arms Company. They ceased to make and sell it in 1890. The weapon has this peculiarity. When it is fired the trigger must be released—the trigger finger must

cease to press it—before it is cocked for another discharge."

While the sergeant examined the bullets, Colonel Blake made a note of this illuminating fact.

"These cartridges were undoubtedly made for the Winchester-Colt Revolver," the sergeant resumed. "They are thirty-eight caliber, long, central-fire cartridges, with a square base. The weight, the shape of the point, the form and faces of the cannelures leave no room for doubt."

The following is directly quoted from the brief of the district attorney:

"William Maynard, business salesman for the Winchester Repeating Arms Company, in charge of the retail department of the sales depot at No. 312 Broadway, New York (fols. 1560-1), testified that he was familiar with revolver ammunition and had been for twenty-six years; that he had examined the four bullets carefully with the aid of a magnifying glass and by measuring and weighing; that they were all from the same manufacture of cartridge, namely, the so-called thirty-eight caliber long made by the Winchester Company prior to October, 1890; and that its manufacture was then discontinued. He said the American Bull-Dog revolver, one of the cheap forms, would use the cartridge, that it has five lands and five grooves, and that the number of lands is the same as the number of depressions in each of the bullets. The witness also testified that the Colt revolver and the American Bulldog

were the only revolvers which carried this cartridge both of which were discarded in 1890. The witness identified an American Bulldog revolver marked People's exhibit 18 (fols. 1541, 1583)."

It was, therefore, an antiquated weapon, easily identified, and no longer on sale.

Colonel Blake learned that the trade in northern New York bought their supplies of Winchester Arms and ammunition from a store of the company in Utica.

On his return the colonel stopped at this store. Its record of sales for some years prior to 1890 were still on file. A bookkeeper was paid to make an immediate survey of those records and ascertain to what tradesmen in St. Lawrence County the American Bulldog revolver had been sold. His report was that only one revolver of that type had been sold in St. Lawrence County. It had been shipped in September, 1889, with three boxes of thirty-eight caliber, long, central-fire cartridges to fit it, to E. J. Bonfield, a hardware dealer of the village of Massena.

A little later Shad went with Colonel Blake to Massena. They learned that Mr. Bonfield had sold his stock and gone out of business in 1890. His goods had gone to some merchant in Norwalk. Shad

and the district attorney drove to that small town, which was five miles from Ashfield. In the large and prosperous general store run by Cobb and Maxwell they found the long resting-place of the antiquated weapon which had killed Oscar Perry. Mr. Cobb had bought the revolver and its boxes of cartridges from Bonfield in 1889.

"To whom and when did you sell it?" the colonel asked.

Mr. Cobb answered: "We sold it cheap to old Bumpy Brown, the tinker. He said that he was getting it for another man who wanted to shoot some cats."

On examining his books Mr. Cobb reported that the sale had been made on the third of November of that year. He had thought of it since he had heard of the old man's arrest.

"This is important evidence. Why didn't you report it to me?" was the query of the district attorney.

"Well, I was in California when Bumpy was arrested. I didn't get back until a week ago. I thought that I'd wait and see what happened. I don't believe Bumpy is guilty."

"Why not?"

"Well, I like the old chap. He gets drunk now

and then, and I guess he's a good deal of a liar, but he's as harmless as a kitten. Anyway, if the evidence is any good, you've got it now."

"Have you any idea or suspicion as to the last owner of this weapon?"

"No, sir, but I think that Brown told me the truth."

As Colonel Blake and his young clerk went to the hotel for supper the former said:

"This is a curious case. Again it comes up to Bumpy Brown. We'll know more of this matter before we sleep."

They returned to Canton by the evening train and drove directly to the jail. Bumpy was brought out to the sheriff's office to talk with them. He was in a cheerful mood, but the prison pallor was on his face. He put his hands on Shad's shoulders and looked in his eyes and exclaimed:

"My boy! Don't you lose faith in me."

"Never," Shad answered.

The colonel spoke: "This boy had almost convinced me of your innocence until I learned to-day that a part of your testimony is false. You once owned a revolver."

Bumpy answered:

"No, I didn't. I bought a revolver one day at

Cobb and Maxwell's in Norwalk, but I bought it for another man. I never owned it a minute. I took it to Robert Royce that day. He said that in travelin' around I might see a chance to buy a good revolver cheap. If I did, I was to git it for him. The island was overrun with cats. He wanted to shoot some of 'em. He give me exactly what the revolver an' ca'tridges cost. It was a five-dollar bill he give me. It had been tore in the middle an' pasted together. He said he had got it from Henry Lockwood that day an' that he'd guarantee it was good."

"Was any one present when you delivered the revolver?"

"Not as I remember of, no, sir. He was alone in the shop. He went up-stairs an' got a present for me. It was a knit muffler with his initials wove into it. He said that he never used it. I put it away somewhere in the house so I could use it when cold weather come."

"What did you do with that five-dollar bill that was torn in the middle?" Colonel Blake asked.

Bumpy Brown thought a moment.

"Well, sir, I might as well tell you—I give it to my wife to keep for me."

"Your wife!" the colonel exclaimed. "I thought that your wife had been dead for years."

"I don't blame ye fer thinkin' so," the old man went on. "I put her in her grave years ago, but she ain't dead, no, sir. She's up there in that little shack o' mine an' lookin' at me an' talkin' to me, just as she used to, every day I'm to home. I miss her awful when I'm away."

The old man paused and wiped his eyes with his handkerchief and continued:

"She'll look down at me an' say: 'Hello, Bill,' an' we'll have a kind of a talk together when I go home, an' she'll set me to work cleanin' up the house an' fixin' the furniture just as she used to like it. Ye see, I alwus used to give her the money to keep. We lived comf'table. I never got drunk them days—never. I done well. There on the wall she's argued with me 'bout my foolishness an' I promised her that I wouldn't do it no more an' I agreed that I'd give her the money to save just as I used to. Now, what I say is private. I took down her pictur' off the wall an' mortiсed the back o' the frame an' put a slide over the mortice so neat ye couldn't see it. Every week I slipped some money into that hole in the frame. It was like givin' it to her to keep for me. She looked kind o' pleased about it. I guess she's got as much as fifty dollars saved up for a rainy day."

"I'll take you to Brown's Cove to-morrow and we'll see if we can find that five-dollar bill."

"Well, sir, you'll find out that I ain't no liar," said Bumpy. "If I do any murderin' it must be that I do it in my sleep. I ain't never ketched myself in the act—not yet."

As Shad and Colonel Blake were leaving the jail the latter said: "It is almost clear to me that the old man has been the victim of a plot. I think that we shall soon be done with him save as a witness."

The sheriff drove out to Brown's Cove next day with the district attorney and the tinker. They found the mended bill with other money in the hiding-place Bumpy had described. Henry Lockwood was at his farm near the cove. He identified the five-dollar bill in question. He had taken it in part payment for cattle. It was badly torn. He mended it. He gave it to Royce in paying a bill and guaranteed its validity. In doing so he had made a note in his memorandum book of its number. The identification was perfect.

As they left Lockwood's house the district attorney said to the old man:

"It does look as if your wife was still alive. I think that she is going to get you out of this scrape."

"Oh, she—she's a wonderful woman!" said the tinker. "I could always count on her in the day o' need."

Colonel Blake's mind was nearing its decision. The tan suit, the motive, the possession of the revolver and the rubbers seemed clearly to indicate the guilt of Royce.

CHAPTER XI

THE MYSTERIOUS ARM

THERE was one shadow on the evidential value of the revolver in the possession of Colonel Blake. It was possible that another weapon of that type might have drifted into the north country. This shadow could never be wholly removed but the able officer proposed to do what he could to diminish it. Shad was present when the colonel was discussing the matter with his assistant.

"We should visit every hardware store and pawn shop from Watertown to Malone," said the district attorney. "It's quite a job."

"I'd like to do it," Shad proposed with a wistful smile.

"I presume that you would do it well, but you're a little young for that kind of thing," the colonel answered.

That afternoon Colonel Blake said to the boy:

"I'm going to Watertown to-morrow and I'll take you with me."

They took the morning train for Watertown. As they rode the colonel talked to the boy about business methods.

He said: "Not many know how to deliver mental goods. Some men never know when their wagon is unloaded. In business, time is money, especially the time of the other fellow. Don't be reckless with that. Boys are apt to impart unnecessary information."

Shad looked up the word "impart" in his pocket dictionary. That was ever with him. His vocabulary grew when he talked with the colonel.

"It's a pretty good world but you and I have to distrust it more or less," the latter continued. "Some one will always be trying to get the better of us. We must be alert."

In the silence that followed Shad laid his plans. They arrived in the thriving city of Watertown and went to the Woodruff House where the colonel did some telephoning. They proceeded to the leading hardware store.

"Now go ahead and do business. I'll stand by," said Blake.

Politely the boy asked for Mr. Jones, the proprietor. The two were led to his office.

In a dignified manner Shad introduced himself. Colonel Blake and Mr. Jones stood by, smiling.

"Who is this man?" Jones asked, looking at Blake.

"I am not going to impart unnecessary information," the boy answered with a smile. "He's my clerk this morning, but I guess he'll be promoted soon."

The men laughed.

Shad took the revolver and the cartridges found in Bumpy Brown's jacket from his bag and proceeded to business.

Mr. Jones examined the exhibits and said: "I have never sold this weapon or its ammunition."

He signed a statement to that effect.

Shad replaced the revolver.

"You needn't worry about that boy. He'll get along," said Jones.

That day Shad got his declaration signed by every dealer in guns and ammunition in the city and by its one pawnbroker while the colonel was conferring with certain clients. The boy had won the confidence of his chief. He was sent to other villages. His work ended in Ashfield. He had found no place where a Winchester Colt revolver had been sold. He telephoned to the colonel who said:

"There's nothing more you can do in Ashfield. Come home on the evening train and go directly to the office. I'll be at work there."

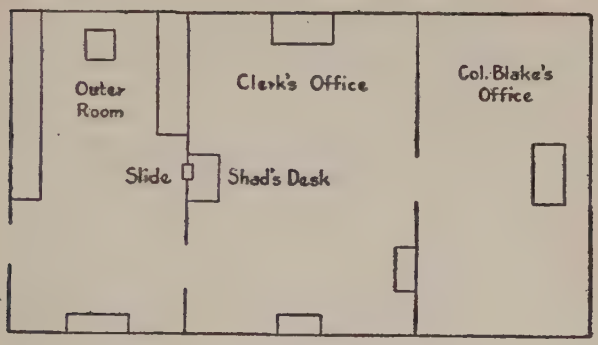
"I'll go straight from the train to the office," Shad answered.

Colonel Blake's offices were up one flight from the main street of the village in the rear of a brick building. It is necessary to the understanding of a singular event in the case of the People against Brown, that the reader should have a clear perception of a part of the structure of these offices and the points at which the help employed near their entrance was stationed.

The colonel was the most distinguished and popular advocate on the northern border. He rarely lost a case. For that reason many people were coming to consult him—some from remote parts of the county—every week-day. To save his time, appointments were made and certain impatient persons had to wait a day before seeing him.

There was an outer room in which a young typist received all comers. Against the walls were chairs and settees generally filled with waiting people. The typist opened a panel in an oak partition and gave their names and the nature of their business to a clerk who sat at a table inside the partition and

against it. Shad was immediately trained for this latter task.



The evening train for the south was almost an hour late. Shad ate his supper with the small bag in his lap and got aboard the train arriving at the county-seat about eight-thirty. Only the drug stores and saloons were open at that hour. There were not more than half a dozen people in the streets.

He went to the office. The anteroom was dark. The colonel's key was in the door that opened from it to the large room occupied, in business hours, by clerks and stenographers. The colonel was at work in his private room the door of which was open. Shad put the bag on his desk and removed his overcoat and muffler. The lawyer came out and greeted him. The boy delivered the declarations to his

chief. They stood a moment talking together. Colonel Blake stood facing the door.

In the middle of a sentence he stopped suddenly. He was looking at a man's arm which had been thrust through the open slide in the oak partition. Its hand seized the little leather bag on Shad's desk. Before the colonel had quite recovered from his astonishment it vanished with the bag. The lawyer ran to the door. It would not open. It was locked. The thief had turned the key on its farther side. The bag was gone with the man who had seized it, and they were helpless. The colonel ran to the telephone and called the sheriff. Within two minutes the latter, with his deputies, was out on the streets.

Colonel Blake returned from the telephone.

"The Devil and Tom Walker!" he exclaimed.

"This kind of thing is all well enough in fiction, but when it jumps into real life it's going too far. That was the arm of the murderer or an accomplice. He may have followed you from the train. If I had not been here he might have overcome you with violence. It is likely that some one heard you call to me over the wire that you would go straight from the train to the office. We are getting close to the guilty man. He is scared. He is desperate. He thinks that the revolver is a vital part of our case.

He doesn't know that it is so well known that it is no longer needed. Its evidence is on record."

"My old slouch hat was in that bag with the revolver," said Shad.

"Well, you see the gossips of Ashfield have been telling that you had in your bag the revolver the murderer used and the slouch hat that he wore. He thought that he was getting an important haul. Let him think so."

Colonel Blake went to the telephone and called the home of Judge Swift in Ashfield.

"I have reason to believe that the man who killed Oscar Perry is in or near this village. Please go quickly and see if Robert Royce is in Ashfield. It's important. Let me know at my office as soon as possible," the colonel requested.

The sheriff came and unlocked the door.

"We've scoured the town," he said. "We have seen no stranger. I learn that a team hitched to a buggy stood in front of your door a few minutes ago. It faced toward the river. A woman sat in the buggy."

The lawyer told what had happened in the office.

Sheriff Colewell said: "The thief, whoever he is, got into that buggy with the bag and was a mile out of town when you called me."

The telephone bell rang. Colonel Blake answered it. He was astonished by the information that came to him from Judge Swift. It was this:

"Robert Royce is now sitting by the fireside at the Westminster Hotel in Ashfield. Rodney [the proprietor] tells me that he has been sitting in the chair he now occupies ever since he finished eating his supper about quarter past six."

Blake told the judge of the singular incident of the evening and rang off. He came out of his office.

"Well, Sheriff, I'm about ready for an important move in this game of checkers," he said. "I've got a man in the king row. I'm going to move for Bumpy Brown's release on bail."

"You don't think that he's guilty?"

"Well, we have evidence enough to hang him, but I'm sure that we'd be cheating the gallows. I'll say no more about it now."

They went to their homes.

The County Court convened in the morning.

The district attorney, in view of the discovery of new evidence in the case of the People against William Brown, moved for the release of the defendant on bail freely offered by a number of responsible Grand Army men. "I am convinced that the prisoner if he is set free can be of some service to us."

The motion was granted. Late that afternoon Colonel Blake called Shad to his office. He said: "I think that you now have a chance to render me an important service. You may fail. If you do I shall not blame you. The old man is not easy to manage. He knows the truth about this case. I am convinced of that, but neither the sheriff nor I can get a word out of him. He is willing to die, if he has to, but he will not speak. You have had a hard time lately. I am going to give you a vacation. I want you to go up with Bumpy Brown to-morrow and live with him or near him for a couple of weeks. The old man likes you and Bony. For you, especially, he entertains a real affection. Perhaps you can get him to help us. I want to know who is that pretty Miss De Long who works in South Bolton and who came to his little house one Sunday when you were there. I can not place her. She seems to have dropped out of the skies. I can find nobody in Malone who ever heard of her and the name she goes by is not known there. How does it come about that she and Bumpy Brown are on familiar terms? I have staked out the ground for you. It may be that love can accomplish what fear could not."

"I don't believe that I ought to do that," Shad objected. "The old man has been good to me."

"And I want you to be good to him. You are not to be a spy but a friend. You will be under no obligation to report anything which he is unwilling that I should know."

"Then I shall enjoy my job," Shad answered.

The next day was warm and bright. A light rain had fallen in the night. Shad got a livery team and an ample store of provisions for Bumpy's larder. This included ham, bacon, beefsteak and a loin of venison. He telegraphed to Bony asking him to meet them at the Fun Shop. They put a warm brick in the bottom of Dick's cage and covered its bars with a shawl. Before noon they arrived in a sleigh at the end of the trail leading into Brown's Cove.

Bony, standing by the door, waved his hat as they drew near.

"Welcome home!" he shouted.

Bumpy shook his hand but did not speak. They hurried into the shack. It was warm. Its floor was swept clean, its walls and furniture were dusted. Bumpy stood a moment looking up at the portrait of his wife. Just a faint, quivering "Hello, mother!" came from his lips. He hurried to the filled water pail, took down a dipper and drank. He looked about him.

"Neat as a pin! Ain't it?" he asked.

Shad winked to Bony as he said: "We'll go out an' break up some more wood an' leave you with the woman a few minutes."

The boys went out-of-doors and cut down a dead tree in the near thicket.

"I never heard him call her 'mother' before," said Shad.

"Nor I," Bony answered. "Ye know I'm kind o' scared for the old man."

"Why?"

"Well, there's a lot o' fools around here who think he's guilty. They may try to do him harm."

"We'll have to protect him. I'll send a line to Colonel Blake about that."

"I don't see how he's goin' to make a livin'," Bony declared. "It's winter time. He can't travel around much. He has to git home every night to look after that ol' bird."

"He has some money saved up and if he needs more the colonel is going to give it to him."

They returned to the shack. Bumpy was now in a cheerful mood. The bird was laughing and going over his reminiscent and familiar sayings on the broad window-sill near the oven. Shad unwrapped the supplies of flour, beef, butter, eggs, potatoes, onions, bacon, venison, condensed milk and coffee.

"Well, boys, there's some dead so'gers layin' around here, but we might be in worse shape, as a feller used to say that had a hump on his back," Bumpy began. "Don't look so solemn. We'll fix up a good dinner. Then we'll git the ol' fiddle out o' the chest there in the corner an' see what it can do to help. You look kind o' nervous. What's the matter?"

"I've been talkin' with some fools that still think you're guilty," Bony answered.

"Well, fools are like frogs in a pond. You can hear 'em preachin' day an' night, but nobody is ever converted."

Bumpy had washed at the sink and was drying his face and hands.

"The People ag'in' Brown!" he exclaimed, looking downward in a thoughtful manner. "Boys, to tell ye the dead honest truth, ol' Brown has been a fool himself. If there's anything that fools hate it's competition. Folks used to say that Brown was quite a feller. I thought so myself but I've turned ag'in' him."

The parrot was chattering.

Bumpy leaned over the cage and added:

"Ol' Brown is dead an' gone. He's been hung. You've got a new pardner."

"God is love," the bird answered.

"That's the kind o' talk!" the old man went on. "She was right. She was alwus right. Well, boys, let's not git excited. You've worked up some wood. Le's skirmish around for some happiness."

He began to prepare the venison roast for the oven.

He turned to the boys and said: "Boys, it'll be a kind of a grindstun for yer appetities if ye keep on with the wood job till I git dinner ready."

They went to the ravine and resumed their work with Bumpy's ax and buck-saw. In an hour or so the old man came out and shouted to them: "Don't tear down the woods. Can't ye see when ye've gone fur enough? Come in to dinner."

As they came he added: "I don't dare let ye git too hungry. I want suthin' to eat myself. Go an' wash yer hands."

They sat down to their dinner of venison and baked potatoes and biscuit and coffee. Bumpy was happy again.

"Now, boys, this is a dinner to be et slow an' deliberate, not as if ye was in a hurry to git it out o' sight," said Bumpy. "It ain't respec'ful. Take it easy."

Their dinner eaten, Bony remarked:

"I wish we had some pumpkin pie."

Bumpy warned: "Don't go to growlin'. Keep yer temper. You've had 'nough."

Bony apologized and asked him to tell about his life in jail.

"I don't want to think of it," said the old man. "This mornin' I got into the sheriff's bathtub an' washed it all off me."

The boys helped with the dishes. As they sat by the fire Bony drew three Amity Dam cigars from his pocket and generously passed them.

"No, I'm too tired. The pipe fer me," said Bumpy. "I don't like Eph's cigars. They're kind o' quick-tempered. I want peace to-night. Cigars are like Indians, hostile an' friendly."

"I'll take a chance," Shad resolved as he and Bony lighted up.

The boys sucked hard but could get no smoke.

Bumpy got a piece of wire.

"Ram that through 'em," he suggested. "Then maybe they'll behave. Learn 'em who's master."

The obstinacy of the two cigars was overcome by the wire, but the boys spat frequently and seemed to be getting the worst of it.

"I think that Eph's cigars are made to keep boys good," said Bumpy with a laugh.

"They have gizzards in 'em," said Bony with a sad look. "They're as hard to kill as a cat."

Simultaneously the boys gave up, having decided that as an aid to happiness the cigars were a failure.

"I ought to have known better," said Shad. "I haven't smoked since I quarreled with a cigar named Eph's Best in Bony's room one night after Miss Spenlow had gone to bed. It almost crippled me. How do you get along with that woman?"

"Same as ever," said Bony. "Sniffs an' looks me over every night when I come in. Sometimes she makes me go an' take a bath 'fore I go to bed. It's awful."

"How is the Home for the Friendless?"

"Gosh! She's bringin' me up fer the Home. Miss Benson has made her chairman of the Infants' Committee. She's terrible strict now."

Bumpy got out his fiddle, tuned it up and played while the bird sang. It was time to light the lamps when Bony left. Shad and Bumpy were going up to the Dam in the morning to get kerosene, saleratus and other needed supplies.

"I'll see you to-morrow," said Bony as he went away.

Bumpy lighted the lamps. He had strung a clothes line and put out a lot of bed clothing to air

in the breeze. Mattresses, sheets, covers and pillows were now brought in and heaped on chairs around the stove.

"I do everything just as the woman used to," he said. "I know it pleases her."

Bumpy and Shad sat down in the lamplight by the table. The room was warm and cozy. They began to talk of the great theme of the countryside.

Bumpy said: "I ain't goin' to ask no questions, but I can't help wonderin' what new idee the district attorney has got in his mind."

"I don't know, but I am sure that he thinks you are innocent," Shad answered.

"He had evidence enough to hang me. Why didn't he go ahead? I've lived about long enough."

"He is an honest man. He could maybe satisfy the people by hanging you, but he has got to satisfy himself."

"I believe it. He is an honest man. I wonder what tree his mind has lit on."

Shad was quick to answer. "I don't know, but I wonder what tree your mind has lit on. I am not here to be a spy. I am your friend. I shall report nothing that you say to me without your consent."

Bumpy held out his hand. "Put 'er there!" he said. "I'm certain no man ever had a better friend."

A silence followed. Shad broke it by saying: "Some one must have put those cartridges in your jacket. Some one threw that revolver into the river here in front of your house."

Bumpy arose from his chair and got a drink of water. Coming back to his chair he said: "It makes me mad. I could raise hell, but I'm in a fix where I got to keep still an' I'm a-goin' to. I'm willin' to die without a whimper but I won't talk. Don't ask me no questions an' don't tell what I've said. There's a God in Heaven. He'll have to settle this matter."

There was a moment of silence in which they heard only the whistling of the wind and the ticking of the clock.

Bumpy took up his violin and began to play. It cheered him. He put it away with a changed look on his face. Shad had brought books with him to read and study. Among them was Dickens' delightful story of *Great Expectations*. He proposed that he read it aloud.

"Go ahead," said Bumpy. "It'll be like old times. The woman used to read to me every night."

The boy began reading and the evening passed in a kind of magic spell. The clock struck eleven. Shad put down the book.

"By mighty! I wonder if that's all so," said the old man. "It's like eatin' venison steak. I don't want to go to bed."

"It's time, though. I've read till my throat is sore."

Bumpy let down a platform hinged upon the wall with folding legs on its outer corners. On this he put a small mattress and made a bed for the boy. He made up the lounge for himself, covered the bird's cage with a shawl, laid some hard-wood sticks on the fire, bolted the door and put out the lights. Soon they were both asleep.

CHAPTER XII

NEW FACTORS IN THE PROBLEM

IN THE morning they left a warm fire in the stove to keep Dick comfortable and walked to Amity Dam.

"I guess I'd be more comf'table to home but I might as well know, first as last, what the People think o' Brown," Bumpy said as they started.

They found in the little village a chilly atmosphere in no way related to the weather. They met Deacon Starks and Mr. Meriwether in the edge of the village. These men stopped and gazed at Shad and Bumpy but did not speak. The children on their way to school followed them toward the store, whispering and staring curiously at the old man. A little snow, now melting, had fallen in the night. Two small boys across the street began to jeer and pelt him with snowballs. Shad and Bumpy mounted the steps in front of Smithers' store and entered. Mr. Smithers stood behind the desk at the end of

the west counter. He shook hands with the boy, saying:

"Shad, I'm glad to see you, but I'd rather you wouldn't bring this man here."

"Why not?" Shad asked. "He's been released. I think that the district attorney has concluded that he isn't guilty."

"That may be," said the mild Mr. Smithers in a gentle tone. "I don't want to argue with you. We have our own opinions here. We who live near the scene of the murder ought to know something about it."

"We who have been working on the case ought to know something about it," Shad answered. "But I see that this is no place for Mr. Brown to be in. If you'll let him sit down cellar a little while, till this crowd of boys and girls have gone to school, I'll take him away."

"All right, take Mr. Brown down to the cellar," said Smithers in a lady-like tone as he wrung his hands. There was a note of irony in the words, "Mr. Brown." He added: "When you go please take him out of the hatch-way."

There was a stern look in Bumpy's face when Shad led him down the dusty stairs to sit by the kerosene tank in the gloomy cellar.

"It's purty bad, ain't it?" said the old man as he wiped his eyes and blew his nose with his red handkerchief. "Them children are a kind of a weather-vane. God! I guess there's nobody that loves children as I do."

"It's bad but don't worry. There's a God in Heaven," the boy answered. "I'll come for you soon."

He returned to the store and bought his provisions and hurried up to Miss Spenlow's. She kissed his cheek and congratulated him on his appearance and prospects and on sundry good reports which had come to her. They sat down together in the parlor. He told her of Bumpy's release and of what had happened on the street and in Smithers' store.

"It's an outrage," she declared. "You don't think he's guilty, do you?"

"I know he isn't guilty."

"Poor man! Everybody here will have it that he's guilty except Doctor Gorse and me. We have our own ideas. What will Bumpy Brown do? I have always been sorry for him in spite of his being such a drunkard."

"He doesn't drink any more."

"So Bony says, and I'm dreadful glad to hear you say it. He can't earn a living. There's such a feel-

ing around here. There's almost nobody that would have him in the house. Poor creature! Perhaps I could get him into the Home for the Friendless."

"It will not be necessary. He'll be cared for. We shall know the truth before long and these fools will all be ashamed of themselves."

"I wish that I had time to tell you of the wonderful work that the Home for the Friendless is doing. Did you hear that Lydia Benson had asked me to be chairman of the Infant Committee?"

"Yes, I forgot to congratulate you."

"It's a wicked world," said Miss Spenlow. "I never dreamed how perfectly dreadful it was until I got into this work."

Shad smiled. He began to suspect that the great Miss Lydia Benson had had a somewhat humorous motive in making the appointment.

"I want you to go an' take that poor old man out of that horrid cellar and bring him here," said Miss Spenlow. "I'll go over and tell Doctor Gorse that you'll be here soon. He wants to see you."

The beloved doctor was at the little boarding-house when Shad returned with Bumpy. The doctor greeted them with the grave, dignified and gentle courtesy for which he was famous. He turned to Miss Spenlow and said:

"I would like to talk privately with young Mr. Morryson. Perhaps you will take Brown into the dining-room and close the door for a few minutes."

When he and Shad were alone the doctor said:

"The district attorney is not yet in the central current of the singular stream of events which has engaged his attention. There is one episode of which he may not have learned.

"On the fifth of November a stranger arrived in Ashfield. He was a brawny man about six feet tall, with a freckled face and large and prominent ears. He registered at the Westminster Hotel as Donald Algyre from Winchester Springs, Ontario. When he arrived he wore a broad-brimmed hat. Later he wore a Scotch cap that has a parted crown and ribbons at the base, like those worn much in rural Canada. He seemed to have no business. He was a friendly man and a good talker. He had money. He spent it freely in the barrooms. He drank with all their cheerful habitués—the horsemen, the sports, the roustabouts. He had traveled much. He had been a cowboy in the wild West. He was a good story-teller. The boys liked him.

"Some one discovered that he carried a big revolver in his hip pocket. He went into the woods for a hunt with Royce. There Royce tells of seeing

him throw a silver quarter in the air and shoot a hole in it with his revolver before it came down.

"Now in the early evening of the tenth of November he was seen in a canoe on the river. Roger Wingate, a patient of mine, and his young son, passed near him in a boat. The time was a quarter of seven or nearly that. It was rather dark. The boy sat in the bow. He had his father's dark lantern. He opened it suddenly and flung its light on the stranger. Here was unmistakably the man known as Algyre. Wingate had met him. He spoke but got no answer. Now the point at which they met was nearly opposite Brown's Cove. Wingate thought nothing of the incident. It seemed to have no relation to the murder."

Shad was quick to say: "That man couldn't have got to Doolittle's house by seven o'clock."

"It would have been impossible. No suspicion of that ever entered the mind of my patient. He had forgotten the matter until the excitement of yesterday in Ashfield had begun to spread."

"What excitement?" Shad asked.

"Oh, you have not heard of it?"

"No, I left Canton early and was with Bumpy at his shack all yesterday and got here less than an hour ago."

"Well, a while back I had written to a classmate of mine at Magill University, who is in practise at Winchester Springs, Ontario. I had framed a theory and I wanted to learn what he knew about Donald Algyre. He answered promptly. No man of the name and description I had given was known in that village or in the country surrounding it. The genial stranger had vanished from our neighboring village. I was mystified. Detectives from Chicago arrived in Ashfield on the noon train yesterday. They were looking for the man described in this document."

He drew from his pocket a small poster containing a half-tone photograph and the following announcement:

Reward of $5,000

For information which will lead to the arrest of the famous bandit and bank robber, Reuben Smith alias John O'Brien alias Percival Roberts alias and lately Donald Algyre of whom this is a photograph. He is about six feet tall. He has large, bony hands and rather broad shoulders. His face is freckled, his hair red, his ears large and prominent. When last seen he was dressed in a dark and rather shabby suit. He wore a Canadian Scotch cap. Address communications to the police of your own town or to

Allen Pinkerton,
Chicago, Ill.

It will be remembered that Shad and Bony had seen the man so well described in the poster, sitting with Royce, Anderson and others at the Westminster Hotel in the evening of the day of their successful hunt for the hats and the handkerchief. The boy read the words of Mr. Pinkerton with deep interest. A thought flashed in upon him.

He asked: "Do you know when this man was last seen in Ashfield?"

The doctor answered: "It is well known that his last appearance there was about seven o'clock in the evening of December first. A telegram had been delivered to him that evening. He paid his bill. Royce ate supper with him. In a long ulster and yarn mittens he went out of the front door of the hotel with his two bags. The bell boy offered to help him but he said, 'No, thank you.' The door closed and he was gone. He had vanished. It would seem that no one got a glimpse of him after that. It is supposed that, somewhere near, a wagon was waiting for him."

"I think that I saw his hand and arm that night," said Shad.

He told the doctor of the singular event in Colonel Blake's office on the night of December first.

"This is interesting," said the doctor gravely.

"But who was the woman in the buggy?" Shad asked.

"If I were to guess," said the doctor, "I would say that she was a man in a woman's head-dress and cloak. I would say further—but I have gone far enough. Don't let probabilities deceive you. This is evident. The daredevil alien crook arrives. He is a generous and agreeable companion. In one of the barrooms he falls in with our local talent. They become intimate. It is a curious fact that if you turn a crook loose in a town, he will soon find his brother, if there is one to be found. They will be friends. Now the stranger was a deep and cunning man. With the help of whisky he soon knew what our novice had in his mind.

"A man like that has mastered the arts of making alcohol his servant. He may pretend to be drunk but he is always able to do his work. The other fellow unbuttons his mind. The skilful crook doesn't. Our hayseed with a rotten soul grew confidential in his cups. Algyre was sympathetic. He offered to help in some part of the proceeding that was safe and easy. You may be sure that he was to be well paid in cash for his trouble. He dug into the background of the situation. He made a few expert suggestions.

"I have wondered a little that our local talent should be capable of creating a problem so intricate that even a man of Colonel Blake's acumen has been deceived. I think that the famous criminal whom the Pinkertons described conceived the plan of our problem. The local bungler made a mess of it. He killed the wrong party."

Shad said: "Yes. He meant to kill Mrs. Doolittle but he had never used that revolver. He didn't know how to use it."

"Exactly!" the doctor exclaimed. "You see at a point on the road opposite his canoe our crook met the murderer, who passed the revolver to him. He slipped across the river, dropped the weapon near Bumpy's shack, put the cartridges in the old man's jacket pocket, crossed and ran down the river half a mile. There he left the canoe and went to the house of Peter Lalone where he was spending the night—probably playing poker with some of our local sharps."

Shad's eyes glowed with interest and delight as the doctor raveled out the threads of the well-knit problem.

"The colonel will be glad to hear of this," he said.

"If you put my theory before him, he will natu-

rally ask: 'Why would a clever criminal, involved in big things and sought by the police, put his life and liberty in danger in this small affair?'

"I answer, that he didn't. He took the precaution to establish an unshakable alibi. At precisely seven fifteen he called at Henry Lockwood's—more than three miles from the scene of the crime—and asked for Mr. Lockwood. Learning that Lockwood was not at home, he asked for Mrs. Lockwood. He was shown to the sitting-room. He gave her a pair of mittens which he had borrowed from Henry the day before when he, Algyre, was going off for a long drive in the country. Mrs. Lockwood asked him if he would sit down and wait for Henry. He looked at the clock and answered: 'No, thank you. I see it's a quarter past seven and I must be getting back.'"

Shad smiled with delight, saying: "That man is no bungler. He knows his business."

"It is all well planned and rather admirable," the doctor went on. "But for one trifling accident, which had no right to happen, these thoughts would never have come to me. Wingate for the first time in weeks was out on the river in his boat with a lighted dark-lantern in the hands of his son—a circumstance not to be foreseen or expected. At this

time of year it is rare that any one goes out on the river after dark.

"Now there is another matter to be stressed in your talk with the district attorney. Bank robbers, however successful they may be, are apt to be in need of available cash when they have got away from the scene of a daring exploit and are waiting for the excitement to blow over. They dare not take their loot with them. The reason is as plain as the nose on your face. If they are caught with negotiable bonds or a large sum of money, it has to be accounted for. They are safer with a little money than with much. Their loot is for a time concealed or turned over to some confederate with whom they can have no immediate communication. A thief who has stolen a great sum may easily be broke if the police happen to be pressing him. A few hundred dollars might be very useful to a man who is only a few jumps ahead of his pursuers. Of course the telegram which came was in cipher from one of his confederates. He probably went to Canada."

The doctor arose, saying: "I have a long ride to make and I must go. It is presumption, perhaps, but I have mapped out a new trail for you and your chief. If he thinks that it is worth following, I shall be glad to know what terminus it may lead to.

Please remember that my name is not to be mentioned in the matter."

Always after a talk with the doctor, Shad consulted his dictionary. For a moment after his friend had gone he was looking for the words "acumen" and "habitué," then he telephoned to Colonel Blake:

"I ought to see you to-day and things are in such shape here that I can not leave Bumpy."

"What is on your mind?" the colonel asked.

"New evidence. It looks important."

"I'll take the noon train and drive up from Ashfield."

"A Bumpy Brown dinner will be ready when you come," said Shad.

He and Bumpy set out for Brown's Cove. A little beyond the store they met Deacon Starks and his wife. The latter stopped and Mrs. Starks called out:

"Shad Morryson, this is pretty company for you to be in!"

"Well, I don't know any better company in this place."

A cruel ironical laugh came from the woman. The man muttered a reproach to his wife for speaking to blackguards.

The grimy blacksmith looked out of the open doors of his shop with a red-hot iron in his hand as Shad and Bumpy came along. He shook the iron and shouted: "There goes that damn' murderer!"

The blacksmith shop of Hod Sherman was a rendezvous of retired farmers. There was a rude kind of office back of the shop overlooking the river. It was a dingy dusty place, that smelled of burned hoofs and forge gas and horse dung and old iron. Here the men of leisure in Amity Dam met on winter mornings around a rusty stove, smoked and chewed tobacco and drank beer and gossiped and played Old Sledge with sooty cards on a detached door supported by their knees. Bony called this The Soot and Dung Club, having in mind the two vociferous odors that surrounded it as well as deeper grounds of appropriateness.

Men came hurrying out of the gloomy cavern of the shop. One of them who had just come from the store had a paper sack in his hand. He hurriedly opened the sack and hurled an egg at Bumpy. It struck between the shoulders of the old man and spattered its contents on the two pedestrians.

"You hurry on. I'll catch up with you," Shad said to Bumpy.

He ran to the shop door and said to the man who

had thus assaulted them: "You don't know what you are doing. That man has harmed no one. The district attorney knows what he's about. You'll know the facts one of these days and then you'll be sorry."

"They're a lot o' damn' fools there in Canton," the smith bawled out. "How can anybody doubt who is guilty?"

"You're all wrong and you'll know it soon," Shad answered as he hurried away.

The old man was walking fast when Shad caught up with him. He did not speak. For a little time they went on, side by side, in silence. They were well beyond the village on the lonely road when Bumpy said:

"I'd ruther be hung an' done with it. I got to bear it best I can. It's all due me."

"The people can only see one side of any subject an' that's the one that's toward 'em," Shad remarked. "There's lots o' folks here who believe that no one but Republicans and church-members can be honest."

CHAPTER XIII

A NOTABLE DINNER AND SOME INTERESTING TELEGRAMS

THE potatoes and biscuit were baking, the teakettle was singing and Bumpy was grilling his steaks, well basted with strips of bacon, over a bed of wood coals on the grate when Colonel Blake arrived.

"By George! This is a cozy camp and the steaks smell right," said the colonel.

He deposited a number of packages on the table.

"I've brought some more provender and the appetite of a wolf," said Blake. "I could grab one o' those steaks and run off in the woods an' sit down an' growl over it."

He washed at the sink and warmed his cold hands and feet by the fireside.

They sat down to dinner. With the teapot singing on the stove and the wind whistling in the north

gable and the red cedars beyond the door and good food lifting its fragrant invitation from hot plates and steaming cups, there was no more cheering sense of comfort to be found in the north country than was in that warm snug harbor of old Bumpy Brown.

"I thank God that I am here," said the colonel. "Often I hear people thanking God for a dinner which is in the nature of a misfortune."

In the midst of their eating the district attorney exclaimed: "By George! I should have brought with me a cannon, an orator and a male quartette. I need them to help me express my feelings."

He turned to Bumpy and thus clarified his meaning:

"Sir, this steak, biscuit and coffee constitute a revelation of human rights. In a land oppressed by salt pork and milk gravy they are as the corn of Egypt. Also they are full of moral significance. You have a noble pride in your work. You love the toil that makes others happy. If you were alone I suppose that you would be satisfied with a piece of bread and butter and a cold bone to pick."

"Oh, when I'm alone I don't do no fussin'," said Bumpy. "Cold victuals an' a little hot drink will do me. I like comp'ny. So does the woman. It's kind o' lonesome here."

"Is there any one living who knows of your war record?" the lawyer asked.

"Colonel Bill Grimes could tell ye 'bout it if he's on earth. Used to live at the Van Ness House in Burlington. He'd be more than eighty now."

"Where were you born?"

"I object," Bumpy answered, with a laugh. "It's a good place an' I ain't been no credit to it. I never see a more pious neighborhood. 'Less it's necessary I won't blacken its repytation by makin' it responsible fer me."

"It is not material," the colonel ruled with a smile. "You are a man of sovereign parts, wherever they come from. You are rich in the things you have and the things you have not—no telephone, no one crowding in to unload his troubles on you, no securities to worry about, no notes to pay! Here are silence broken only by the voice of friendship, the wind in the chimney and the rain on the roof. Here are warmth and comfort and books to read and the art of turning food into joy."

He lighted a long cigar and offered one to Bumpy.

"No, sir. I'll stick to my pipe," said the latter. "I know how it's loaded. This ol' gun don't kick."

The lawyer sat down comfortably in an arm-

chair by the fire smoking while Bumpy and Shad washed the dishes and put them away. The old man put on his coat, cap and mittens.

"I'll go out an' git some wood ready for the night an' give you fellers a chance to talk business," he said as he was leaving his friends.

Blake turned to the boy and asked: "What is your new evidence?"

First Shad gave him the poster.

"I have seen this," said the colonel. "It is up in every town hereabouts. I know of the coming of Pinkerton's men. You don't suspect Algyre of being our criminal?"

Shad began his story:

"There is a wise man whose name I can not give you. He thinks that Algyre had a hand in the killing of Oscar Perry."

With a memory that missed no detail, he presented the doctor's theory and its background and his own notion that the man whose arm had reached through the panel in their wall, was either that of Algyre himself or that of the real murderer. The colonel listened with deep interest.

"Upon my word, it is a most plausible theory," he said. "The man who made it is no fool and he has some knowledge of the case. Of course the fel-

low who did the shooting had a confederate. Some one had to do the planting that night. It might very well have been Algyre. It is possible that he needed cash. If that is true——"

He paused and smoked thoughtfully.

"Wouldn't you say it was up to Royce again?" Shad asked.

"Royce! Yes. He keeps in the picture. Still, we must be sure of our ground this time. I'm going to give Royce a private examination and see what happens. Has Bumpy Brown given you any light?"

"None."

"We'll go down to Ashfield. Just now it's an interesting center. I want to have a look at that telegram which came to Algyre."

Shad told his friend of the feeling against Bumpy.

"Nobody will harm him," said Blake. "This is not the wild West or the far South. We'll go up to the Dam. I'll have a word with Hod Sherman and his club-mates. Then we'll drive to Ashfield."

Shad promised Bumpy that he would return in a day or two, when the boy and the colonel set out for Amity Dam. The club was briefly addressed by the district attorney. In a few minutes he and Shad were in Bob Stacy's buggy on their way to Ashfield.

They found that the detectives had followed a clue into the wilderness. Royce, the most intimate friend of Algyre, had gone with them. Shad and the colonel went to the Western Union office and got a copy of the telegram which had been delivered to Donald Algyre. This was the message:

Will sent them to me by post boots follow will go. Mart Lewes.

"Come with me and we'll see if we can make out what this means," said Blake.

Shad went with him to the Westminster Hotel, where the colonel engaged a double room for the night. The day was nearly spent. Darkness had fallen. It was a cheerful, well-lighted room. They hung up their hats and coats. The colonel sat down and began to study the message, making notes with his pencil. In a few minutes he remarked:

"Well, Shad, this is a very simple matter. I have the translation of this cipher. Come here and I will show it to you."

What Shad saw was this:

2	4	6	5	3	1
Will	sent	them	to	me	by	post	boots	follow	will	go

The colonel continued: "The real message is this: 'Go. Will follow them. Post me.'

"You see, I learned this art of reading ciphers under a great master in the War Department years ago. It is a fascinating art. They still consult me on difficult problems. This is so easy that any tyro of the least experience could read it. You begin with the last word and continue with the first and then with every other word taken alternately from right to left and from left to right. It is very easy. Yet the average detective would see nothing in the words. They hold a warning and information of prime importance. If I am right, the man who sent that message is either here or has been here. He is probably here now. He knows what the Pinkerton men are doing. You see Algyre has a clever system. He has a man shadowing the detectives. He always knows where they are. Moreover, the shadow has no doubt been posted in another message sent to this office as to the present whereabouts of Algyre. This may lead to interesting adventures, my boy. Come, let us go back to the telegraph office."

They put on their hats and overcoats and went out to the Ashfield Station on the great wire-way. The manager was still on duty.

The colonel called him aside and said: "I am here again in behalf of the people of this county.

Have you received any message or messages for one Sewel Tram?"

"Yes, one. It came yesterday. I remember that peculiar name."

"May I see it please?"

The manager brought the message from his file and Colonel Blake copied it on a Western Union blank. He asked the young man kindly to drop in to his room at the Westminster Hotel for a minute on his way to supper. The colonel and Shad hurried back to their quarters.

Blake spread out the message on his desk and studied it. "Look here, my boy," he said in a moment. "This problem is built on a different plan but it is very simple."

Shad read the message:

To Sewel Tram
Ashfield N. Y.

3 5 7
We must revere Mr. Brock his house gave big order
4 6
to our man Ville. Good Canada money, thirty five thousand seven hundred and forty six dollars.
Den Revel

"First tell me where do you get the name Sewel Tram?" Shad asked.

The colonel answered: "You see the shadow

must keep changing his name. He must have a new name every time he moves. Moreover his new name must always be known to his confederate. Therefore Algyre gave him his Ashfield name. His telegram was signed Mart Lewes. Spell it backward and you get the name of the shadow. To this new message Algyre signs Den Revel. Therefore I presume that Algyre is now known as Ned Lever. It is likely."

The colonel paused to light a cigar.

"What do you make out of this message?" Shad asked. "It doesn't look simple to me."

"Naturally not," said the colonel. "It looks like a perfectly innocent communication from one business man to another. But it clearly tells his confederate to address him at the Revere House, Brockville, Canada. The key to the cipher is in the figures 35746. They indicate the words which carry his message. Therefore the message begins at the third word. After he reaches the double numerals he omits in each case the first figure so that 14, for instance, becomes simply 4. This avoids confusion. It's fairly ingenious. The plan was pretty good. It kept the criminal a jump ahead. They were in bad luck. These messages fell into hands as dangerous for them as any in the United States. I

think that you and I have Algyre alias Ned Lever at our mercy. We'll say nothing to anybody and just go and get him. It will be more fun than hunting grizzly bears."

The local manager of the telegraph company arrived.

The colonel asked: "Did Tram call for his message?"

"Yes, sir. I suppose it was Tram. I gave him the message myself."

"He had a full beard and rather long hair?"

"Yes, sir."

"And was well dressed?"

"Yes. He looked like a drummer."

"Probably you have not seen him since."

"No, sir."

"Thank you. I request that you keep this matter to yourself. I suppose that a few hundred dollars would be useful to you."

"Very."

"Well, justice demands that Tram should not be interfered with—justice to you, to certain injured parties and to me. I am after that reward. It is not all that I am after but the reward is not to be sneezed at. If those Pinkerton men go to fooling with Tram they will cook the goose for all of us.

Your work in the matter will be this: If any message comes to you either for or from Tram call me here or at my office or my house within five minutes and let me know exactly what the message is. I go home on the morning train."

"I shall do as you say."

"It will cause you some trouble perhaps but you will be doing a service to the public and if all goes well it will pay you. Good night."

Shad was thrilled by all this and by thoughts of the prospective adventure.

He asked: "How did you know that Tram had a full beard and long hair?"

The colonel replied: "You see the pursuit has just begun. They have been making a still hunt for their man. It is now an open hunt. They have hit the trail and are asking for the help of the public. Now a shadow must avoid attracting attention to himself. At every change of base he must look to the casual observer like another man. One with a full beard and long hair has only to sit down in a barber's shop and get all the disguise he may require. If he shaves off his mustache he would pass you without being recognized unless you had known him a long time. Think of the changing expression of the head and countenance which the

barber can impart to you—long hair, straight hair, curly hair, short hair, mutton-chop whiskers, side-whiskers that hang like drooping lilacs, galways, the handful of hay on the chin, of the Bumpy Brown variety, the dignified imperial. Then think what the barber's dye can do for you. It can make your foliage red or black or brown or flaxen-blond. Oh, I knew that fellow would be likely to begin his work with plenty of hair and whiskers. They are his rock of safety. Of course he is likely to have only casual observers to contend with. He is a cunning chap. He fusses around with some kind of business—of the house to house variety. Main Street sees little of him."

Shad asked: "Can I go with you to Brockville?"

"Shad, I like you. I don't mind getting hurt myself if it's necessary. This is a good deal of a job. Then, remember Algyre has seen you."

"You know I disguised myself once so that my own father didn't know me," the boy answered.

"I recall that you told me of the limp and the mustache and the deaf mute business. Your cleverness has been proved."

"Besides Algyre saw me only in my old clothes," Shad urged. "I look like somebody now. And then I know what it is to be hurt. I ain't afraid."

"I'll think it over. Let's wash up and go down to supper."

After they had eaten the colonel telephoned to his home. For some minutes he consulted the time tables and a map of the northern border which was always with him. They returned to their room. Colonel Blake sat down at his desk and began to write.

"This is Wednesday," he remarked. "We will tackle our little job to-morrow. I think that my plan will work."

He sat for some minutes composing his telegram. He summoned the boy to his side.

"Here is the little joker which will, I think, put us next to our man. When that is accomplished I shall know what to do."

This is the message which Blake had written:

To Ned Lever
Revere House
Brockville Ont

1 4 6
New field. Watch developments and meet competi-
0 2
tion. Smith sends cash from Morristown goods due
6 8 9
at dock Montreal midnight today. Consignment
5
number 14602689. Let Will Thompson whistle.

7 8 3
Demand three times bonus offered and an answer
5
before two tomorrow. Also balance of 57835
dollars. Sewel Tram

"Now, there is a commercial message. I can see nothing in it to excite suspicion. It is like the kind of thing that shoots over the wires every day between principals and agents here on the border. This is exactly what Algyre will get from it. I have placed the numbers so that you may clearly see the system." He read the translation as follows:

New developments Meet Cash Morristown dock midnight today Whistle three times Answer two.

"Morristown is opposite Brockville," the colonel went on. "I know the ground very well. The dock lies low. It's a favorite landing for small boats. The river is still open. There is no ice in it. The ferry stops at seven. Algyre can easily get a boat and boatman to bring him across. The trip would not take more than fifteen or twenty minutes. If we can get him on this side of the border we shall have no bother with extradition proceedings. He'll naturally conclude that Tram is making a swift getaway and is anxious to jump across the border.

This stout old grizzly will, I think, put his foot in my trap. If he does he may maul us up a little. That's why I think you'd better keep away."

"That's why I want to be there," Shad urged. "I'm crazy to go."

"Wait till my plan is finished and we'll see," said the colonel.

They were talking together when the telephone rang. The Western Union manager was on the wire. He wished to see Colonel Blake and would come right over to his room. He arrived shortly. Tram had just left his office. He had brought in a telegram to be sent. The manager drew it from his pocket and showed it to the colonel. It was as follows:

To John O'Brien, Jr.
Windsor, Ont. Canada

33 30 29 27 25
Take offer of Den Revel if cash sent quick. Tell
23 22 19
Ville to love and revere our venerable friends for
10
future use. I think Brock is reliable. Goods in
5
urgent demand here are numbers thirty-three, twenty-seven, twenty-five, twenty-two, thirty, twenty-nine, nineteen, ten, twenty-three, five.

Sewel Tram

Its cipher was built on a new plan. Soon Colonel Blake had arrived at the following translation:

To John O'Brien Jr.
Windsor, Ont.
Take cash quick to Ned Lever Revere House Brockville Urgent. Sewel Tram

"You will observe again that the numbers are the key to the real message," the Colonel said to the boy. "This time however the counting starts on the last word which is 'numbers' and goes backward. I could have given them a better system but I suppose these boys were in a hurry when they made their plans."

The colonel turned to the telegraph man and asked:

"Do you know where Tram is stopping?"

"I think that he is stopping here. At least when I came in I saw him in the writing-room. He sat reading a copy of the *Watertown Times*. There's a long article in it about Algyre and the arrival in Ashfield of the two Pinkerton men."

The colonel arose, saying: "Slip out if you can without his seeing you. Don't send this message. Hold it until you hear from me. Good night."

In a moment Colonel Blake and his young friend went down to the writing-room. There at its long

table sat the hairy, bearded stranger who was undoubtedly Tram—a well-dressed, good-looking man of about thirty-five years. He was of medium height. His eyes were gray, his hair and beard of a reddish brown color. The colonel and Shad sat down opposite him and began to write. Tram was talking with a man who sat beside him. His manner of speech was deliberate, his voice low and amiable, his words were well chosen. He was a man of some education. There was a touch of humor in certain of his remarks. When this appeared he sniffed and gave a little grunt as if thus to signalize its safe delivery. He said of Algyre that he was likely to get more exercise than he needed. Tram might have passed for a reputable business man who would contribute to every good cause in his community. His face had a benevolent expression but his eyes were active, shrewd and cunning. Soon he arose, donned his overcoat which had been lying on the back of his chair, and walked to the office and out-of-doors.

Shad and the colonel returned to their room. Immediately the boy gave his chief an imitation of Tram's walk and manner of speech.

"Excellent!" Blake exclaimed. "Don't forget it. I may see a chance to use you."

Shad's memory retained some of the stranger's sayings. He went over them again and again before they got into bed.

"You need only a mustache and some whiskers to make a perfect Tram at night. I'll think over the situation and give you words for your part. I am sure that the Mummers Club at the college can supply you with the needed hair."

In a moment the colonel added: "It is evident that Algyre is in need of available cash. The O'Brien telegram indicates it. The fact that he goes to a place so near the center of excitement as Brockville almost proves it. He is desperate. My wire will bring him across the river."

"He should have had plenty of money after the killing of Perry," Shad suggested.

"There's many a slip possible in such a matter. The real murderer gets scared. He holds off. He is afraid to draw a large sum of money out of the bank. If he should be arrested he would have to tell what he did with it. That was a matter he hadn't thought of. He prefers to pay in small amounts. That would lead to a quarrel and such a quarrel would be a help to us. Then Algyre was a poker player. Suppose the poker party had fellows in it like Charley Hutch and Old Aust Doran. They

could get him between them and easily strip him in a night."

They got into bed. The colonel was soon asleep, but Shad's day did not end so easily. He was elated by the fact that he enjoyed the friendship and shared the confidence of Colonel Blake. Far into the night he lay thinking of the great adventure ahead. Above all he was eager for a chance to offer further proof of his manhood to Colonel and Mrs. Blake. He was now nearly eighteen. He felt old enough and of sufficient importance even to marry.

CHAPTER XIV

THE ADVENTURE AT MORRISTOWN

THEY were up early in the morning. Colonel Blake wrote a letter to the local telephone manager who was his friend. In the letter he said:

If any one seeks to communicate to-day or to-morrow with one Ned Lever in Brockville it is, I think, important to the interest of law and order in this county, which I am sworn to protect, that the effort should fail. It is no less important to them that this letter and its subject should be kept in the strictest confidence. Please burn this when read.

They had an early breakfast and sent a messenger with their letter to the house of the telephone manager. They reached Canton about seven o'clock. The colonel went to his home and Shad to his lodgings. The colonel urged the boy to go to his house with him.

"You'll get another breakfast," he suggested with a smile.

That was a consideration which made the boy pause and reflect a moment. His linen was now a bit soiled. Moreover he got a certain joy from the thought that Ruth and her mother would regret his failure to appear at their home. Of course Colonel Blake would tell of the invitation and his answer. So with pleasant words he declined it, not forgetting to ask that he be remembered to Ruth and her mother. He was now getting to be a rather well spoken lad with a great pride in his personal appearance. Those days at the progressive euchre parties in Canton, women were often speaking of his comeliness and good manners.

It was a busy morning at the office. A little before noon the colonel summoned Shad to his room.

"My plans are complete," said the lawyer. "You and the sheriff are going with me. We leave on the four o'clock train for Ogdensburg. A friend of mine will take us up the river in his steam yacht. I have borrowed a lot of hair. We'll graft it on you and see how it looks."

He opened a box containing a wig, a mustache and a beard. They tried them. The hirsute adornments were sufficiently accurate in shape and color.

"Go to a barber and get your hair cut close," said the colonel. "Get your bag ready for a night

away and bring it here. We shall leave for the train at three-forty-five. We shall have a chance to talk as we ride."

When they were sitting together in a car almost empty, the colonel drew a sheet of paper from his pocket. It contained a diagram and some writing.

"Here is the layout of the dock as I recall it," he explained. "If the ferry-boat is in the way I will have it moved. On either side there will be a group of barrels, the kind of thing you look for on a dock. Among these barrels the sheriff and I will be concealed—he on one side and I on the other. You would have the center of the stage. It is a point of some danger. I would advise you to keep out of it and on the side. I think that I know an officer in Ogdensburg who could play the part of Tram well enough."

Shad's courage had not failed him. "I want to do it," the boy urged.

"All right. You're an unusual lad and I'd like to see you get the credit for this. I'm sure you can do it and I'll make the job as safe as I can. You'll be standing close to the ferry house. When you hear the boat and the signal you will step to the center of the dock and answer with two whistles. I expect that Algyre will come ashore.

"You will say: 'Let the boat go. A gentleman of your talents should not be traveling in a row-boat. O'Brien is here with a steam yacht. Come on.'"

"You will walk toward the rear of the dock. If he suspects nothing he will follow. He may throw a light on you. If he does you will look the part. If he follows you we shall close in on him with Winchester rifles and signal for the search-light on the yacht's deck."

"Winchester rifles!" Shad exclaimed.

"Yes. We mustn't kill the man if we can avoid it. The light will daze him. If he refuses to throw up his hands and tries to draw his weapon I shall put his pistol arm out of business. I'm fairly quick on the trigger myself. There'll be some kind of shelter for you. I shall not know just what or where it will be until I look the ground over. You will have time to get behind it before the shooting begins."

"Suppose he doesn't get out of the boat? He may smell a rat and put back for Canada."

"In that case we shall have to head him off with the yacht or run him down if necessary before he gets to the border which is far out in the stream. If he comes to that dock he is our man. The devil couldn't save him."

They reached Ogdensburg and drove to Hall's dock where the yacht and its commander were waiting. Sheriff Colewell had arrived in a buggy. He had driven across country with the rifles. The yacht was ready to move. A surgeon famous in that land was aboard. They set out at once on their little cruise up the river.

Now the owner of the yacht was the successful merchant, Mr. Shaw of Ogdensburg. He was a host as merry-hearted and companionable and generous as any that ever cruised the old river. By telephone the colonel had requested the help of his boat and crew "in a matter concerning the public welfare." He had further requested him to see that a dozen empty barrels were put on board.

"I'm going to try to arrest a rather desperate criminal," the colonel had explained. "One or the other of us may get hurt a little. Therefore we must have a surgeon aboard. It's only a short trip. We shall be back at Ogdensburg in the morning."

When the nature and details of the enterprise were laid before the boat's commander in his luxurious cabin he insisted on expressing his hearty good wishes with a bottle of champagne.

"Wait till dinner time," said the colonel. "We'll drink a glass with you then. It is not to be a care-

less night. I used to enjoy stepping on this kind of a banana peel and slipping down just for the fun of it. It jars me to fall these days so I step careful. How is the search-light working?"

"It's a wonder—a kind of a hooded sun," said Shaw. "I could count the hairs in your mustache with it a quarter of a mile away."

Darkness had fallen when they reached the dock in Morristown. The abandoned ferry-boat was well out of the way. The crew put the barrels ashore. The colonel and the sheriff placed them to their liking. Some fifty feet back from the dock stood a small building occupied during the day by a collector of customs. No one was on duty there, the ferry having stopped.

The colonel stood a moment looking at it. The boy was at his side.

"This will be your shelter," the lawyer whispered. "Get behind it as soon as you can."

They returned to the yacht. It put out in the river, swung about and anchored down-stream a little and about a hundred and fifty feet from the landing far out of the way of through traffic.

Dinner was ready. Soon they were seated with their host in the main cabin, with cocktails and hors-d'œuvres on the table.

"When a man is ruined and ready for the junk heap as I am cocktails are a consolation," said the colonel. "Until one gets wrinkles and corns and a churlish voice, a bald head and a rebellious stomach he has no need of the consolation of strong drink."

Shad did not fail to understand that the colonel's remark was aimed at him. He took a sip from his glass with a teaspoon just to see how it tasted. He felt now like a man among men and it seemed necessary that he should know the taste as well as the meaning of this thing they called "consolation."

With deep interest he listened to their talk and their stories as the dinner was served. He felt rather drowsy while the men sat with their cigars and coffee talking of local politics. Nothing could have tempted him to yield to this feeling. Soon they came to the familiar theme of the murder of Oscar Perry.

"Are you seeking the guilty man to-night?" Shaw asked.

The colonel answered: "Strictly between ourselves I hope to show you the fellow that the Pinkerton men are after. I think that he knows who killed Perry and that's why I want him."

Shaw turned to the district attorney and said: "I guess that you know who killed Perry."

"It's a difficult problem, my friend. Twice I

have thought that I knew the man. Then I have had to back-water. I had evidence enough to convict Bumpy Brown but it was artificial although very well made. The master mechanic who made it is the man we have come here to meet. I want to know him. He has an intellect."

Mr. Shaw told of an event which had begun to be a subject of gossip in Ogdensburg.

"I have heard that the bank robber disappeared from Ashfield in the evening of the first," he said. "That night near eleven o'clock a big stranger in a long ulster came into Perquette's saloon in our city. He bought a drink and some cigars and inquired how he could get across the river. A Frenchman who works for me happened to be there. The stranger made a bargain with him to be taken across in a rowboat. I would not have heard of it save for the fact that he gave the Frenchman a counterfeit five-dollar bill. For that reason he told me of the incident and showed me the bill which the savings bank had refused to accept. I asked the Frenchman to describe him. He said that the stranger was about six feet tall; that his collar was turned up so that he didn't notice his ears. He did observe that the man wore a sandy beard. The thought came to me that it might have been a false beard."

"You were probably right," said Blake. "I have reason to believe that he arrived in Ogdensburg a little before the hour you mention and that he crossed the river that night."

At eleven o'clock all lights were extinguished on the yacht except those behind covered windows. A little later the colonel, and Shad in his make-up, and the sheriff with his loaded rifles were taken ashore in a small boat. Shaw and his men were to be on deck at a quarter of twelve ready to turn on the search-light when they heard the bo'sun's whistle in Blake's possession.

At last the stage was set, the actors in their places. The night was calm but cloudy. The weather, as it had been for weeks, was remarkably mild for the time of year. Shad rehearsed his part. A night boat passed. They stood waiting in a silence broken only by the splashing of its wheels. Suddenly they heard the measured beat of oars. Anxiously they listened as the sound drew nearer. A small boat was coming. The colonel and the sheriff stooped down among the barrels, their rifles in hand. Shad stood in the middle of the dock some twenty feet from its edge. The great trial of his life was closing in upon him. The boat drew near. A little way out from the dock it stopped.

The whistles sounded—one—two—three—in exact compliance with directions.

Shad answered with two whistles. The boat moved forward and touched the dock. A man came ashore.

The boy imitated Tram's voice to perfection when he said: "Let the boat go. A gentleman of your talents should not be traveling in rowboats. [Here he sniffed and grunted as Tram had done.] O'Brien is here with a steam yacht. Come on."

The newcomer paid and discharged his boatman. He turned, addressing his supposed comrade with that profane and affectionate oath of the wild West, a part of which would seem to be a severe reflection on the mother of the man addressed. Shad made no answer but started at a fast walk toward the small custom-house. The man followed.

Precisely at this point a thing happened which was no part of the program. The sheriff, in rising, shouldered against one of the barrels and created a startling noise. The stranger turned. It is likely that he saw the risen figures of Blake and Colewell. He flung off his coat. Like a sped arrow his form flashed through the darkness to the dock's edge and leaped into the water. He called to his boatman now well out of sight. Neither the sheriff nor

Colonel Blake had tried to stop him. The colonel blew his whistle. As they stood facing the dock's edge another form darted by them and tore into the river-surface with a splash that wet their faces. It was the form of Shad who had thrown off his two coats and was pursuing the fugitive. The search-light was now shining on the dock and the two men. It swept the water, and in a second or so its ray was falling on the swimmers. What a hole in the night it made! Shad, as expert in water as a duck, was gaining. They could see the leaping spray and bubbles as his swift arms broke the shining waves. On he went, drawing nearer to the fugitive at every stroke. It was a thrilling contest bathed in that flood of golden light. In a moment Shad had caught the back of the man's collar and was hanging on. The fugitive turned and was trying to break his hold but could not. A boat and boatman drew up at the dock-side. Colonel Blake and the sheriff jumped aboard.

"Pull out to them as quick as you can," the colonel commanded. "We are not here just to see a swimming match."

The struggle in the river continued. The water boiled around the boy and his captive. Blake and those on the yacht were watching it with eager eyes.

They could see that the desperado was tiring. In a moment he had given up trying to shake off the strong and agile lad who clung to his collar. The boat drew up to them. The colonel who sat in the stern took the hand of the boy which was now disengaged. Thus with Shad's arm as a tow-line they hauled the boy and the exhausted criminal to the yacht's side.

"You needn't be afraid of him," said Shad. "I took his revolver out of his hip pocket and threw it away."

The two were pulled aboard.

"Sheriff, take this man to your room," said the colonel. "I'll bring a dry suit of clothes and a good stiff drink of hot whisky for him. I'm going to put this boy to bed and give him a rubbing. A first-class criminal and a first-class boy are not to be carelessly treated."

CHAPTER XV

THE DOCTOR MAKES A DISCOVERY

WHEN, after a drink of hot water and a good rubbing, Shad ceased to shiver and was lying comfortably in bed Colonel Blake went to the sheriff's room. Algyre, in the colonel's dry clothing, was sitting by the bed, his feet shackled. He was in a bitter mood. He greeted the district attorney with foul and profane words.

"Don't be nasty just because you've been outwitted," said Blake. "I'm going to treat you well as long as you're in my hands."

Algyre shouted angrily: "I'd rather be in hell than spend another day among the God-damned hicks in this part o' the country."

"Well, sir, every one in your line of business feels the same way about it," Blake answered with a smile of good nature. "If a man has anything on him it's about the most dangerous part of God's earth to be in."

There was a moment of silence.

The colonel went on: "I happen to know that you're an able chap. You oughtn't to be living the life of a fugitive. The best thing you can do is to clean your slate. Begin by telling what you know about the killing of Oscar Perry. If you'll do that I'll do what I can for you here and elsewhere."

The answer of the unfortunate man was rather decisive.

"Go to hell," he said. "I know nothing about the Perry murder."

The district attorney gave up, knowing that no progress could be made while the criminal was in his present frame of mind.

The yacht had arrived at her dock in Ogdensburg. The party spent the remainder of the night aboard. Next day Shad, the colonel and the sheriff took the train to Canton with their prisoner whose resentment had not abated. He was still sullen and abusive.

That day Shad returned with more provisions to the little house at Brown's Cove.

"You're more in need of rest than ever now," the colonel had said to him.

"I knew you'd be a-comin'," Bumpy shouted. "This mornin' I see a white swan in the sky. It

means that a friend is comin'. By Jeedix! I've got suthin' good fer yer dinner an' don't you doubt it. The day you left I shot a wild goose on the marsh below here. I've been keepin' him. He's in prime shape."

"Keep him till to-morrow," Shad suggested. "It'll be Sunday. I'll go up and git Bony to come down."

"Exac'ly!" Bumpy exclaimed. "That's the caper. We don't really need that goose. You've brought some beef steak. I'll whale up a little o' that with some bacon an' we'll git along proper."

They had much to talk about. Shad told of his great adventure while they were at the table.

"By Jeedix! You ought to have fit at Gettysburg," said Bumpy. "I guess ye would if you'd 'a' been born an' was old enough."

"This place beats the world for good eating," Shad remarked, as he took another helping of the grilled steak. "It just beats the world. They had good tasting stuff on that yacht but I didn't dare eat half what I wanted to."

When they had washed and put away the dishes Bumpy said: "If you're goin' to be a lawyer you've got to study. I don't want to hear another word from you till night. I've got some wood to cut and I'll git out o' yer way."

That afternoon, sitting comfortably by a window in the warm room, Shad began the reading of Blackstone's *Commentaries*.

The colonel had let him take the first volume of the famous classic with the notion that it was like hitching a goat to a plow.

"It will be interesting to see what he says about it," he remarked as he took the first volume from its case. "I wonder if the lad will surprise me again. I rather think that this will stump him."

Shad was a courageous goat. When the light began to fade Bumpy came in.

"How be ye gittin' along?" the old man asked.

"Good, but there's some words here that are not in my dictionary. What does 'contravention' mean?"

"I don't just exac'ly know," Bumpy answered as he put some wood on the fire. "I guess it has suthin' to do with politics. It's like a snag in the river. When I run on to one I push my boat off an' back up a little an' go 'round it."

"I've put down a list o' words that I've got to know about. I'll go up to the Dam early in the morning and see the doctor. He'll explain 'em to me."

Shad lighted the reading lamp. He found the

story in which he and Bumpy had become interested and said: "Let's see what Pip and old Joe are doing."

"By Jeedix! You wait till I draw my boot an' loosen my belt an' git my pipe lit. I want to be good an' ready."

He drew his boot and lighted his pipe with a sliver at the stove hearth and hauled his armchair near the table, saying: "Now let 'er go."

Shad began reading. Meanwhile the parrot stood holding his head down near the bars of his cage on the window-sill and saying in a low gentle voice: "Hello, darling. Hello. Are you happy? Praise the Lord!" It was as if some unseen hand were petting him. Shad paused a moment, looking up at the bird with a smile of amusement.

"Cur'us, ain't it?" said Bumpy. "Betsy Brown is there rubbin' his head just as she used to. He sees her plain. He can feel her hand. I guess parrots' eyes can see things that we can't."

"Do you mean that her ghost is here?" Shad asked with a tingle in his nerves.

"I don't call it that. It's a kind of mean word. It ain't friendly. I'd say angel was the word. Don't mind it. Go on with yer readin's. She'll enjoy it as much as I do."

Shad resumed his reading. Soon they were both absorbed in the moving tale and smiling or laughing at its quaint humor. For more than two hours they sat entranced in that magic world of the great story-teller. The clock struck seven. The boy closed the book.

"I'm tired and hungry," he said. "Let's have a little snack of cold victuals."

"I could smash the clock," said Bumpy. "I didn't know book readin' could grab hold o' ye an' hang on so. Come to think of it, I'm hungry too."

Bumpy brought a snack of cold meat, doughnuts and cheese and a pitcher of cider from his keg in the little cellar under the floor. They finished their snack and read on until bed-time. Bumpy as usual put heavy sticks on the fire, turned the damper, covered his bird with a shawl and hung the cage on a hook fastened to one of the cross-beams. As Bumpy got into bed yawning the boy heard him saying to himself.

"And there lay round upon the ground great heaps of so'gers."

Always he was up before daylight in the morning, when he lighted his lamp, started his fire, washed, and dusted the furniture and swept the floor and for a moment opened the two doors.

"I like to kick the night out o' the house with a breeze o' wind," he used to say.

When he shook Shad's shoulder in the morning the grateful odor of coffee and buckwheat cakes and frying sausage was in the air.

"Come, ol' friend," he called. "It's the next day. Breakfast is ready an' I warn ye it's fit fer kings an' queens. I'm hungry an' it ain't safe to leave me alone with these flapjacks."

Shad needed no urging. He leaped out of bed and dressed in a hurry and washed at the river's edge.

"Hurry up an' comb yer hair," Bumpy sputtered as he brought the hot platters to the table. "It looks as if a mouse had made a nest in it."

The boy had a great liking for hot cakes and maple sirup and sausage. Bumpy seemed to find a sufficient reward for his work in Shad's enjoyment. He kept an eye on him in the fashion of an interested witness.

"Don't spill so much sirup on 'em," he was wont to say. "By Jeedix! You make 'em look like an island in a red pond. There ain't no sense in that. You don't take more'n two swallers fer a flapjack. Anybody would think ye was mad at 'em."

Bumpy's sputtering had a background of good

nature. Shad enjoyed it. After breakfast he brought in two pails of water and filled the wood-box. Soon after seven o'clock he set out for Amity Dam with a volume of Blackstone under his arm.

"Be on hand fer dinner a leetle before two," Bumpy called to him from the door.

Having arrived in the familiar village, Shad went at once to the house of his friend the doctor. The latter was reading in his office.

"I am glad to see you, boy," he said without rising. "Sit down and tell me what has happened."

Shad told the doctor of the steps that led to the capture of Algyre and of the prisoner's sullen attitude.

"Well done!" the doctor exclaimed with no change in the expression of his face. "It will yield no immediate result but it is a long step toward the truth. Soon or late the man may uncover it. He is a smart fellow. He knows that Blake has not evidence enough to hold him. We have as yet only a suspicion. Even if he became a witness for the people, he could not escape life imprisonment or a long term for a crime so atrocious. He is a born gambler. He would rather take his chances in the West. But if they have a good case against him and he should be convicted we may expect help from him.

We may not have long to wait. Meanwhile, my dear boy, you will, of course, get a share of the reward."

"I haven't thought of that. I wouldn't know what to do with it," Shad answered.

"But you would know what to do with an education."

"I'm getting educated. I'm learning something every day. I'd rather the reward would go to you and Colonel Blake."

The doctor smiled and said: "Well, boy, if I am entitled to any of it, which I question, it shall be yours. There is another matter of which I would speak. You are to mention it only to Colonel Blake. Be careful that no one overhears you. I recall your telling me once of the handsome young lady who worked in the store in South Bolton. You had seen her one day at Bumpy Brown's shack. I went to call on a patient in that village about ten days ago. I heard some gossip about her. It was interesting but unkind. I went to the store. The girl was there alone. The look of her confirmed the gossip. It grieved me to see a beautiful girl friendless and in her condition. I talked with her a little. She didn't seem to know what was the matter. It was a sad case. I gave her my telephone number and told her that when she needed help I would come.

"Familiar as I am with the process, I always feel when I help to deliver a child as if I had had a humble part in a miracle. The girl went to a lonely settlement away back in the woods. There she got the help of a midwife. The child was born. Something went wrong. She began to fail and asked them to send for me. I went and found her in a critical condition. She will probably die. Some rotten-hearted man who has no share in her trouble has brought her to that pass.

"I am not preaching to you, my boy. I tell you these things only because I suspect that the girl has some connection with our case. Robert Royce took her to the house of the midwife. He was often seen with her. Now Royce is the heir of Mrs. Doolittle. The theory has come to my friend, Judge Swift, that Mrs. Doolittle did not like the girl; that she had threatened to disinherit the young man if he married her. Therein is a double motive for getting rid of his mother."

Shad smiled, saying: "I feel sure that Royce is the man and I think that Colonel Blake does."

"I do not feel sure although there is much to indicate it," the doctor went on. "I know Royce well. I would say that he is not the type of man we are seeking. Still it is easy to be deceived."

Shad showed the volume he had been studying to the doctor and the queries in his note-book. The learned man answered them, and said:

"The time has come when you need a bigger dictionary. I will lend you mine. I will have my man bring it to you at Brown's Cove."

He looked through many pages of the *Commentaries* and noted down the meaning of the unusual words and Latin phrases. He gave the boy a book entitled *The Youth's History of England,* and recommended that he read it carefully before continuing his study of Blackstone. The doctor arose. His horse and buckboard were at the door.

"I must be going," he said. "Please go and see Miss Spenlow. She has a deep interest in you."

The doctor set out on his rounds and Shad went to the boarding-house.

CHAPTER XVI

MISS SPENLOW EXPRESSES NEW SENTIMENTS

THE benevolent spirit of Miss Betsy Spenlow had entered upon a great sentimental adventure. Her face shone with a new enthusiasm. She arose and threw her arms around the boy and kissed him. Her affectionate greeting was a bore to him, but he took it with a cheerful countenance.

"You are growing so big and handsome!" she exclaimed. "Sit down. I want to tell you what has happened. I have got the sweetest, little, teenty, weenty baby that you ever saw."

Shad turned with a look of astonishment.

"The doctor brought it here so that I could take it to the Home for the Friendless," she went on. "The little thing has got hold of my heart. I don't know how I'm ever going to part with it. Just come into my bedroom and take a look at her. It's a little girl."

The boy had no interest in babies, but he went.

The child lay asleep, with a nursing bottle beside it, in a swinging brass crib. Miss Spenlow lifted it in her arms and said:

"Did you ever see anything so cunning in your life? Look at that little hand."

To Shad the young child was red and smelly and unattractive, but he would not take issue with a lady in such a matter. He agreed with her like a gentleman.

"Look at these dainty baby clothes," she went on. "The doctor brought them and the crib and everything."

"Isn't it a great trouble to you?" Shad asked.

"Not a bit. The young girls come in and help me take care of it night and morning. I was never so happy in my life as I am with this baby."

She put it back in its crib and they returned to the sitting-room.

"Had you heard that Deacon Plumb was dead?" she asked.

"Yes, I read of it in the Canton paper."

"What a pity!" she exclaimed. "If there ever was a good Christian man in this world, it was Deacon Plumb. He left five hundred dollars to the Home for the Friendless."

Shad remembered how fussy the deacon had

been about his mail. When told that there was none for him he was wont to stare sternly at the boy as if he didn't believe it, and go away muttering.

Miss Spenlow added: "I have written a poem which was read at the church sociable the other evening. Some said that it ought to be published. I will read it to you."

She went to her room and fetched the poem and read it in a tender voice. How appropriate was its title: *Lurking Perils!* The key-note of her life was caution—a zeal for safety. There were those who said that it was in part responsible for her continued maidenhood. She loved the people of Amity Dam young and old. The chairman of the Infant Committee of the Home for the Friendless had a deep solicitude for the welfare of her neighbors. Indeed it was impossible for any respectable person to be quite friendless in that community.

Shad was never to forget the poem. There was no magic in its lines. It was a plain-spoken herald and avatar of the new science of bacteriology to which the good lady had given her faith. Thus it ran:

LURKING PERILS

Demetrius Lorenzo Plumb
Ran a sliver in his thumb
And sought it with a pin.

His hand and arm began to swell,
A fever on his system fell,
Blood poisoning set in.

He died. O friends! beware, I pray,
Of lurking perils in your way,
While you can draw life's breath.
Wood slivers, pins and rusty nails,
Sharp edges on old pans and pails,
May hold the sting of death.

"Lurking perils!" she exclaimed in a tender tone. "They are constantly taking their toll of precious lives. The people should be warned."

She enlarged the list of them, necessarily limited in the poem, for Shad's benefit.

He was to be particularly careful in handling his jack-knife. At this point Shad was rescued by the arrival of Bony, who had been mending his canoe.

Shad wrote a letter to Colonel Blake, in which he reported the news which had come out in his interview with the doctor. This done, he and Bony talked a while. The doctor's hired girl came in to sit with the baby while Miss Spenlow went to Sunday-school. She was its superintendent. Soon the boys set out afoot for Brown's Cove.

As they passed the basement of the little church they could hear the Sunday-school children singing while Miss Spenlow stood beating time with a ruler:

Around the throne of God in Heaven
Ten thousand children stand,
Children whose sins are all forgiven,
A holy, happy band,
Singing glory, glory,
Glory be to God on high.

"Hear that holy, happy band of little devils," said the cynical Bony. "She's now after the swelled thumbs an' rusty nails of sin. I'm glad that I don't git so scared about safety. I don't believe that God would like me any better if I stood on a crack in the floor an' sang them silly songs. Gosh! The ol' maid gits worse an' worse. She's got that baby an' expects me to hold it while she's airin' out the bedroom for the night an' monkeying around fetchin' the milk from the kitchen. If I git a scratch on my finger it has to be doctored an' fussed with an' done up. Sometimes she'll collar me an' make me set down while she reads p'otry to me or the sermon o' some ol' minister. It's awful. She reads the Sunday newspapers an' believes everything that's in 'em. Sets and tells how the world is goin' to freeze up an' kill everybody or how it's in danger o' bein' run into an' smashed by a comet. I don't know what a comet is, but it's one of her lurkin' perils. They're killin' me. I can't stan' it. One o' these days I'm a-goin' to light out."

"Don't do it. She's an awful good woman."

"I know it, but I git sick o' bein' sniffed over an' doctored an' read to an' prayed for an' I hate babies."

"It is awful but it might be worse," Shad answered. "Stick to it. I have hopes of amounting to something and if I succeed I'm going to take you along with me. That's what I'm going to do. I never forget a friend. You wait and see."

Shad swore Bony to secrecy and told him of the late phases in the remarkable problem of the People, and of the capture of Algyre.

"It's wonderful—what you've done," said Bony. "I heard 'em tellin' in the store that the district attorney thought you was the most promisin' boy that he had ever seen."

Shad smiled and was silent for a little time. The words had quickened the beating of his heart. They were bread to his soul.

"I don't know what he thinks," Shad answered. "He's never told me. I'm going to do my best to please him. That's all I can do."

"I feel sorry for poor ol' Bumpy. He was up at the Dam while you was away to see if there was any letter for him. Ol' Doran was in the store an' abused him shameful—called him a liar an' a thief

an' a murderer. Bumpy walked away an' never said a word. When that ol' pup Doran got out o' the store I called him every name I could lay my tongue to."

Shad answered: "The poor old man never said a word to me about it. He must have a heavy heart in him but he keeps cheerful. There's something kind o' wonderful about him. I know a lot I couldn't tell—not yet."

"There ain't one o' them pin heads that does so much talkin' that's fit to black his shoes."

They were nearing the little house in Brown's Cove. Bumpy, who had been watching the trail through a window as he worked, hustled out of the front door to greet them.

"Hurry up, you pair of young ganders," he shouted. "The old goose is ready an' smokin' hot. Come on."

It was then that Shad gave the little house a name which passed into history. It was suggested by like names in the novels of Reade and Dickens.

"Let's call it The House of the Three Ganders," he proposed.

"I agree an' that makes a majority," said Bumpy. "Hurry now an' git washed up an' yer hairs combed."

CHAPTER XVII

IMPORTANT EVENTS IN THE HOUSE OF THE THREE GANDERS

THE weather turned stormy. At daylight the air was full of rain flying in the wind. Shad brought in a good supply of wood and water and sat down with his task while the rain-drops hissed upon the roof and window-panes. The doctor had sent down his big Webster's Dictionary. Shad got far along with *The Youth's History of England* that day. Bumpy was a real help to the boy while the reading progressed. In his droll way he explained how dukes, lords, barons and popes were made and what was expected of them.

"A lord was a man who fit good in battle," he explained. "The king slaps him on the back an' says, 'Ol' boy, put 'er there. You've done grand. Hereafter you'll have all the land an' money ye want an' nothin' to do but look as beautiful as ye can

an' be a gentleman an' my friend an' yer oldest boy shall be a lord an' yer daughters shall be grand ladies.'

"Ye see a kingdom was a kind of a doll factory where ladies an' gentlemen was made an' dressed up an' sold to the people. An' the people give 'em castles to live in an' horses an' hounds to play with. The people has to have some one that wears velvet coats an' gowns an' looks grand an' does more or less cuttin' up. It gives 'em suthin' to wonder at an' talk about. What would the folks do in Amity Dam if everybody was good. Their mouths would dry up an' their tongues would git par'lyzed."

When night came Shad sat under the evening lamp with Bumpy and they discussed the great battles of the people for their liberty with the State, the barons and the Church of which he had been reading. In three days he had a fairly good understanding of the background of the *Commentaries* of Sir William Blackstone.

"I'd say your gun was to'lable well loaded," said the old man in their last review. "I guess the colonel will jump when you shoot it off at him. He'll break down an' holler fer help."

"I couldn't have done half so much if it hadn't been for the doctor," Shad answered.

"It's a good thing for a boy to know how to pick out his friends," Bumpy declared.

Saturday morning Shad went up to the Dam for the mail and needed provisions. He received a letter from Colonel Blake which said:

My dear boy: I have some good news. You look for me Sunday about one o'clock at Brown's Cove for another dinner with you and Bumpy. Tell him that I have not forgotten the Elysium of peace and joy I found under his roof. Go and buy a good fat turkey and whatever else you may need and charge the cost to me. Don't worry about the *Commentaries*. You are young yet for that kind of food.

Fowls were every day coming down from the hills to market. Shad found one to his liking at Smithers' store. That done, he went to the doctor's house. The learned man in his great coonskin coat stood by his cutter at the door. He was about to begin his rounds in the country. He called the boy aside and said:

"The young woman is getting better. She has promised to commit to me important revelations. I may get them on my next visit. Say nothing of this to any one. I don't want her to be harried by lawyers. She is not yet out of danger. A moment of undue excitement might be fatal to her and to the

hope I have of serving justice. We must be patient."

With that the doctor shook the boy's hand, got into his waiting cutter and drove away.

Shad returned to the store and, with a well-filled basket in one hand and a kerosene can in the other, set out for Brown's Cove. He had intended to invite Bony down to dinner but with Colonel Blake coming for a talk his young friend would be in the way. However, the prospect of seeing his beloved chief allayed his disappointment.

Bumpy was elated by the colonel's compliment and the prospect of having the distinguished lawyer at his table again. "Talk about 'lysiums! That's a long jump ahead o' me, but I'm a-goin' to cook him a turkey that'll make the hair grow on his bald head."

Bumpy had a peculiar way of storing his meat in winter. There was a pulley in the roof-beam under the overhang outside the front door. The turkey, well wrapped in cheese cloth and fast to the end of a cord, was hauled up to the peak where it hung through the night beyond the reach of coons or foxes.

After supper that night they sat under the evening lamp and went on with the adventures of Pip in the humble home of Joe Gargery until bedtime.

Next morning Bumpy prepared the turkey for the oven, stuffing it with saged dressing and basting its breast and sides with strips of well-cured bacon. Then it was buttered with great care. It was an extravagant process, but Bumpy never counted the cost if he were trying to please a friend. When the oven was judged to be hot enough the panned turkey was shoved into it and the doors closed. At that moment he began to look solemn and refused to talk or to allow any interference in the matter of keeping the fire right.

"Now don't talk to me none," he would say. "This job has got to be done right. You run down to Warner's an' git a pint o' cream. Hurry up."

He was almost imperious when practising his beloved art.

Often he was reaching into the hot oven with a long-handled spoon and ladling the drip over the upturned, browning breast of the turkey. As often he felt the boiling potatoes with his fork.

Shad returned with the pitcher of cream.

"Now set the table an' keep an eye out for Colonel Blake," Bumpy commanded. "I don't want to be took by surprise. If he don't come on time we'll hang him without a trial."

The table set, Shad stood by the window watch-

ing the trail. The turkey was hauled out of the oven. Bumpy peeled his potatoes. He put them in the spider and mashed and stirred them, adding cream and butter and salt and pepper with a cunning hand.

"Here he comes!" the boy called.

"Throw open them doors—quick," Bumpy commanded. "There's a leetle too much dinner in the air o' this room."

He shoved his turkey into the cooled oven and closed its doors to protect it from the draft.

"Hello!" the colonel shouted as he came in. "I hope that the dinner is as ready as I am."

"We was scared for fear it would be too ready," Bumpy answered. "A good dinner loses its temper if it has to wait. It gits kind o' disagreeable."

The old man stirred the fire a little and put his coffee on the stove. "Watch it now an' don't let it bile," he said to Shad. "I'm goin' to git some cider fer the colonel that has a razor edge on it."

He was especially careful in the making of coffee with a fixed rule as to quantities and temperature. The second it began to bubble the pot was set in a pan of hot water, there to remain until it was served, but never long. It was a beverage to be remembered.

Shad and Colonel Blake sat down at the table. Proudly Bumpy stood at its head between them and carved the turkey. What a fragrance and flavor were in the tender flesh of the bird and the mashed potatoes! The coffee was a joy.

They spent a delightful hour at the table. The turkey eaten, Bumpy brought on a pumpkin pie.

"It's a surprise," he said. "I made it yesterday while Shad was away. A wedge o' that will finish the job."

"That will require another cup of coffee," said the colonel. He ate his pie and added: "You could do a good business in our town as a caterer. I'll give you twenty dollars to come and cook our Christmas dinner for us."

"My clothes ain't fit fer goin' out in comp'ny."

"I've got that all fixed," the colonel went on. "You and Bony are to go down to Ashfield and get a complete outfit at my expense. You shall have a credit of fifty dollars at the store. See that you spend all of it. Don't scrimp."

"It's liberal," said Bumpy.

With a smiling face he began to pick up the dishes. The colonel lighted his cigar. When the dishes were washed and put away the old man excused himself as usual and went out to cut wood.

The lawyer began his story.

"Shad, we have been sitting at table with the most remarkable character I have known. I have been over to Burlington to see old Colonel Grimes of whom one day Bumpy spoke perhaps inadvertently. The colonel reports that William Brown was the best and bravest soldier in his regiment; that he had told Lincoln of Brown's heroic fighting at Gettysburg and that the president had said that he would be glad to see the young soldier at the White House. Grimes told me that Bumpy refused to go for fear that he would miss a battle.

"The first thing of importance that I have to communicate to you is this: Bumpy is not the liar that he is supposed to be in these parts. He has probably been telling the truth. It is a fact that a man who has the habit of drinking too much ruins his credit among the people who know him. He was getting no pension. Therefore many assumed that his tales of heroic adventure were made out of whole cloth. The world we live in is rather harsh and uncharitable."

"I guess that Bony and I have been a little like that ourselves," Shad answered with a twinge of remorse.

"It was natural that you should fall in with the

popular opinion. The thing I sought most in my trip to Burlington was the private history of this singular man. Grimes told me where he was born and where he married the woman whose portrait is on the wall yonder. She came of a good family. I went to the little town in the mountains. I got the information I wanted. They lived there for years after they were married. Brown had a sawmill. One child was born to them after their marriage—a girl with dark eyes and hair. She would be about twenty-one years old now. The mother died when the child was eleven. It seemed to break the man's heart. He took to drink and became a nuisance to his family. He left the girl with relatives and came west to Ashfield with this remarkable bird which had been his wife's pet. He went to work in a big sawmill. The girl was a bit headstrong. Three years ago she ran away. Word came to them in a week or so that she was with her father. Now there you are. It is altogether likely that the unfortunate girl who worked in the store at South Bolton is his daughter."

"Why doesn't Bumpy claim her?" Shad asked.

"She is handsome and rather proud, I take it," the colonel went on. "He was a drunkard and more or less despised. She was ashamed of him. My theory is that they had a quarrel and agreed to live

apart. I think that she was engaged to some one of means and apparent respectability, in whose identity we, as the state's officers, are deeply interested. Was it Royce, and if so why has he not married her? We shall know soon. The inevitable consequences are closing in on the criminal. I hope to see the young woman to-morrow."

"Don't try to do it—not yet," Shad urged. "I have good reason for asking you to wait."

The colonel sat smoking in a moment of silence.

"I think that I understand you," he said. "I know of no reason why we should be in a hurry."

"Did you get any help from Algyre?" Shad asked.

"None as yet. The detectives have taken him to Chicago. With my help they captured John O'Brien, Jr., his confederate, at Brockville. They have evidence for a prompt conviction and the charge will be murder in the first degree. I think that he will loosen up soon. By the way, the reward has come. Save for a few expenses I am going to give it to you."

Shad's face began to redden.

"To me?" he asked.

"To you. It will give you a liberal education and a start in the world when that is done."

Shad had grown very serious. His eyes were a trifle moist when he said: "I can't see what I've done to get all that money."

"For a boy you've done pretty well. Three times your life has been in danger. You're a good boy and I want to help you along."

"I won't take it unless I can do what I want to with it. I've thought it all over."

"What do you wish to do with it?"

"Give it to Bumpy Brown."

"My boy, the plan is a credit to you," the lawyer answered. "I expected that some like idea would come to your mind, knowing you as I do. Let me make a suggestion. At present Bumpy would not need so much. If it should be necessary later we could help him. Let's put half of the sum out at interest and give him the income from it. Use the remainder for your education. If you wished to help Bony to get a year or two of schooling you could do it."

Shad was quick to say: "I'd like to do that."

"I suggest that you put five hundred dollars in the St. Lawrence County Bank to Bony's credit to be used for clothes and board and also tuition in the Canton Union school. Later, if advisable, you could do more for him."

Shad's eyes brightened. "We could board together and both go to school?" he asked.

"Yes—you could share a big comfortable room between you and have nothing to do but work out your problems together and plod along toward a useful manhood."

Shad rose from his chair. "It's grand," he said as he went and looked out of the window at the old man who was splitting wood.

"Converse has written me a letter. He told me how when he woke you up one day on the shore of the Oswegatchie you rubbed your eyes and asked: 'Is God here?' You were born into a new world that day. I'm not much of a preacher but I'd say that God *is* here. A man who has been pursuing criminals as long as I have is sure to get that opinion."

"I guess you're right," the boy answered.

"'He lifteth up the poor from the dust,'" the colonel quoted as he came and stood by the boy. "It is a great sentence from the greatest of all the law books."

Bumpy had finished his work and was getting ready to come in.

"Poor old man!" the boy exclaimed.

"I've got just one more thing to say about him,"

the colonel remarked, as he stood looking out of the window. "Grimes told me that Sergeant Brown would never apply for a pension although clearly entitled to it. He's growing into quite a considerable figure of a man. I must be off."

The day was near its end. He put on his arctics and his overcoat and added:

"We'll have a great Christmas Day."

At that moment there was a rap at the front door. The doctor's stableman entered. He said to Shad: "If you please, sir, Doctor Gorse wishes to talk with you this evening. I can take you up with me and bring you back. The horse is hitched out on the road."

"I'll join you there in a few minutes."

The doctor's man left them.

The boy turned to Colonel Blake and said: "Something has happened. Maybe we'll get light on our mystery."

Colonel Blake made his acknowledgments to Bumpy, who had just come in, and Shad announced that he was going up to the Dam for an hour or two. In a moment the lawyer and the boy set out on the trail.

The boy parted with his friend on the road where the latter's team was waiting. Shad got

in with the doctor's driver. He had begun to feel grown up. Was he not now a person of some importance? The colonel had seemed to have that opinion. Shad had written an essay on The Common Law. It was full of resounding words. Still it was a creditable effort brightened with characteristic humor.

"If he dares to read it he'll find out that I'm no child," the boy said to himself. "Maybe I'll get *him* pawing over the dictionary."

At the Dam he found a letter from Ruth Blake. It was a pretty letter, in which she said:

Sometimes I think that you do not care whether I write to you or not. Sometimes I think that you hate girls. There are many pretty girls here who would like to know you. I think that you should learn how to dance and you ought to go to the parties.

The letter filled him with a shining happiness.

"I guess that I've been pretty mean to her," he said to himself.

Shad hurried to the doctor's office.

The learned physician sat reading

"I love you, boy," he said. "Your eyes are as bright as the evening star. Your face is like a May morning. Sit down. I have little to tell you save this. The young lady is now in our village."

"In our village!"

"Yes, I brought her down out of the woods yesterday. It is a secret that she is at Miss Spenlow's with her child. The child needs her and she needs the child for a time. The Friendless fund is sufficient to provide for them. I have had a long talk with her. She is Bumpy Brown's daughter."

"I thought so," Shad answered.

"The two were like oil and water," the doctor went on. "Naturally she was ashamed of him. The girl was proud, handsome and rather high-spirited. He was a seedy, irresponsible old liar who was often tipsy."

Shad interrupted the doctor. "We have learned that his lies were not genuine. They were all true. The district attorney has met the colonel of his regiment. He says that Brown was a great soldier and a hero. He would never apply for a pension."

The doctor settled back, surprised, and said:

"Good heavens! It's curious how a mere surmise will grow into common report. It needs only an evil flavor."

Doctor Gorse lighted his pipe and for a little time sat smoking thoughtfully.

"In what you tell me I catch a glimmer of new possibilities," he remarked. "It would be strange if the last should be first and the first should be last."

The doctor paused and added: "I am convinced that the girl is the key to our mystery. She is still obdurate. I suppose that she loves the man who has wronged her. She is between fires. I have brought her here to see what will happen. We suspect Royce and with good reason. Yet I hope that for a time the district attorney will let him alone. The situation should suffer no disturbance. It has not been carelessly planned."

"'Shall I bring Colonel Blake here?"

"No. I had better not see him and it would be just as well if he kept out of this village so that circumstances may drift naturally and undisturbed with wind and tide. I think that you had better keep away from Miss Spenlow's and wait for further advice. Sit down at my desk and write a line to your chief. If you don't mind, I'll dictate the letter."

Shad wrote down these words from the doctor's lips:

My friend advises that you make no move toward Royce or any other person in the matter

of the mystery of Amity Dam until you hear from me again. He hopes that the present posture of affairs, if undisturbed, will lead to definite results.

Shad posted the letter and returned to Brown's Cove.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE DOCTOR'S ARTIFICIAL LIGHTNING

THE boy resumed his work in the little house on the river. He had begun to feel rather wise and learned. He was getting a vocabulary that astonished his friends. The new words were a useful asset, but the fun he had, especially that he derived from the wise and droll observations of the tinker, was of greater value. His days were enriched by cheering visits from Bony, much good food and many a merry conference. A letter came from Colonel Blake saying that he had been summoned to Chicago. He hoped that he would be returning soon with important news. Bony arrived late one afternoon with a message from the doctor. It said:

Please come to my study to-night at seven. I want to confer with you.

He and Bony set out for the Dam at once. As

soon as they were on the road the able satirist began:

"I've told you about that girl and the dear child that Miss Spenlow is so crazy over. She shoves it on me every day and wants to know if I don't think it's the sweetest thing in the world. Gosh all hemlock! I'd light out o' there if I could. But I'm nailed down. The doctor is a smart old cuss—deep as a well. Ye know he told Miss Spenlow to put that girl an' the baby in a room on the first floor that opens on a little back veranda. He said that he didn't want the girl to have to go up an' down stairs. So she and the baby sleep alone nights on the first floor. My window is about ten feet above hers. The doctor sends for me an' what does he do but give me a job. He says—I want you to sit by your front window without a light every night till twelve o'clock an' watch the door-yard an' see if any one comes near the house. If you should see a man keep very quiet. Don't disturb him, but next day let me know what happens.

"Well, I put on a sweater an' sat smokin' by the open window with nothing to do but keep my eye peeled till midnight an' hear the roosters crow an' the water goin' over the dam. Nothin' hap-

pened till las' night. It was darker than pitch. I heard a move outside. In a minute I could see some one slyin' up to the side o' the house. Then I heard a little tap on the window-pane below. There was another little tap an' in a minute darned if some one didn't come out. I couldn't see who 'twas but I knew damn' well 'twas the fair maid. The two of 'em sneaked off into that spruce thicket that goes down to the river. They stayed about ten minutes. Then the girl come back alone an' sneaked into the house. I told the doctor an' he sent me down for you."

Shad arrived at the doctor's at the hour appointed.

"Now I have a rather important job for you," said the wise physician when they were seated together. "The thing has happened which I knew would come to pass. I gave Bony leave to tell you about it. I suppose that he has done so."

"Yes, he told me when we were coming up."

"The man he saw is undoubtedly the girl's lover. You see this is a case of burning love. It's a dangerous proposition. When you get its positive and negative poles close together something is bound to happen. We put the young lady in the center of the stage and the man couldn't keep away from

her. Of course Betsy Spenlow has spread the news of her coming."

"I suppose that we had better have some officers on hand and arrest him when he comes again," Shad proposed.

"Well, that is crude. It wouldn't be conclusive. The situation is not quite ready for such a downright proceeding. Let's use our brains in the matter. I am prepared to take a photograph of him."

"How would you do that in the night?"

"Easily. The time favors us. There is no moon. The weather is mild. In that evergreen thicket is a little mossy glade—a romantic trysting-place for lovers. Undoubtedly they went to that spot and will go there again to-night. We will place our camera in the glade with its shutter open. At the right moment a little powder mixed with magnesium will give us a quick flash and we will get our photograph. If we do our work well, they will think it lightning and be none the wiser."

"How do you get the flash?"

"With electricity. You have learned to telegraph and you know how the spark is made. I have borrowed a battery from Smithers. It is wired and ready. You remember how the spark

played between two pieces of metal when you shifted the lever and touched the key. Well, I have made a keyboard. You will be hidden in the bushes with the board in hand. When you press its key a spark will ignite the powder and magnesium. We will go now and set our trap. I have a small dark lantern to help us when we need it."

They put on their overcoats and went out. With a small bag in his hand the doctor led the boy down the deserted street and through a garden to the river shore. They followed the bank of the stream a little time and entered the rear end of the spruce thicket. They made their way to the glade. On the side of it opposite the trail leading from Miss Spenlow's dooryard they fastened the camera about breast-high to the trunk of a small tree. They covered it with twigs so that only the lens was visible. On a sheet of tin a little back of the camera they poured the powder and magnesium. Some brittle twigs were scattered on the floor of the glade at its entrance so that Shad would know by their crackling when the two were near enough to be photographed. The communicating wires, the battery and key were carefully placed. Shad's station was behind the base of a large pine-tree.

"We are all right if it doesn't rain," said the

doctor. "You are to come here about nine o'clock and find your place with the dark lantern and sit down and wait. You will hear them coming. Get ready. When you are sure that they are in the glade, touch the key. They may come to-night. If not we must shut our camera before daylight and take up our flash material and when night comes again set the works for another trial. We will catch them soon. They are bound to come again. I would look for them this very night. The time is favorable, the ground bare, the weather mild. Such a condition can not last long, and they know it."

Shad returned with his friend to the study where, for an hour or more, he amused himself with the doctor's microscope. At nine o'clock he set out warmly clad with a blanket on his arm and the dark lantern in his hand.

The lights were going out in the little old-fashioned village of Amity Dam, where almost every one went to bed early and arose at dawn. Shad lighted his lantern when he entered the evergreen thicket at the water boundary of the Spenlow place. Mostly with no light to guide him he made his way through the dense growth of young spruces to the big tree. There with a short flash he located his key, placed his blanket, sat down and put out the

light in his lantern. He was in black darkness. He sat for hours listening, and hearing only the steady splash of the falls, some three hundred yards from where he sat, the barking of dogs in the distant countryside and now and then a passing team or the crowing of a cock in the village. Darkness and silence are not agreeable comrades for a boy of a lively imagination. The hours were very long. Some small creature, probably a wood-mouse or a chipmunk, startled him with the noise of its movements in the near thicket. He wondered if there really was any such a thing in the world as a ghost. The night grew stiller. He dimly heard the familiar sound of Miss Spenlow's tall clock as it struck eleven. Long after that hour he heard a team cross the bridge. Slowly it came up the road and passed. Somewhere, not far away—perhaps in the shed of the Smithers' store—it stopped. Was it Royce? He now began to think that his waiting would be rewarded. He was keenly alert. A few dragging minutes followed. Would they never come? Suddenly, the welcome sound of stealthy footsteps! They were coming to the trap. Would the mystery be solved in the next minute or two? The sound of their feet was near. He could hear them brushing the bushes. Cautiously he picked up the piece of

board on which his key was fastened. He heard the crackling of the brittle twigs. The girl and her companion stopped. She was speaking in a low tone. Curiosity checked the hand of the boy.

"Oh, I wish that I had listened to my father," the girl was saying.

In a low tone the man spoke:

"You don't know how I love you. I would rather die than live without you. When you are a little stronger we will go to Australia together and be happy. My God! I would kill any one who came between us. I get desperate thinking of you."

Swift as a bolt of lightning the flash leaped upon them and shook their hearts with terror and darkness fell as quickly as the light had risen. For those affrighted ones it was like the flying open of the doors of hell. For only a fraction of a second they were blinded by the glare of its flames. It may have revealed to one of them the fathomless deep of his own wickedness. The girl gave a little cry as they fled. Hidden behind the broad base of the big tree Shad had not been able to see them, but he had seen the light fling itself through the tops and slender columns beyond him. He sat still. Out near the edge of the thicket he could dimly hear a sound like that of smothered sobbing. This

for only a moment. Then receding footsteps!

Silence fell again. Not until long after he had heard Miss Spenlow's clock tolling the hour of midnight did he arise from his station behind the tree. As he did so he heard a team starting away from some point near Smithers' store. Groping in the darkness he found the camera and covered its lens. He picked up his things and set out for the doctor's house. His learned friend slept in a bedroom on the first floor. Shad tapped on a window-pane in accordance with the doctor's request. The good man arose and opened the front door.

"Well, what luck?"

"They came and I guess that I've got the photograph."

"Good work, my boy!" the doctor exclaimed as he patted the shoulder of his young friend. "I'll put the camera in my dark room and show you to your bed. Perhaps we shall sleep better if we do not know what it has to tell us until morning."

Shad went to bed. His excitement kept him awake until the keen-eyed cocks had seen the light of dawn. When he arose at eight o'clock his venerable friend was at breakfast. He looked very grave.

"Have you developed the photograph?" Shad asked.

"Yes, and it is successful," said the doctor. "I was not surprised but I was deeply saddened. The whole tragic story is now as clear to me as the street I see through yonder window. I hope that you will not mind if I ask you to let the secret lie with me until it is given to Colonel Blake. It is properly his secret. The situation has come to its climax. The time for decisive action has arrived. I think that you had better go to the county-seat and get in touch with the district attorney wherever he may be and tell him that he is needed here at once. I am going down to Ashfield and can take you to the train as well as not. Do you think that they saw you when the flash came?"

"I am sure that they did not. I was so hidden that I could not see them."

He gave the scrap of conversation that he had overheard.

"Ah! I thought so. It's a kind of verbal flash-light on the past."

There was a call on the telephone. The doctor answered it.

"I'll be there in a few minutes," he said.

Turning to Shad he announced: "The girl is sick this morning and no wonder. While you finish your breakfast I'll go and see what I can do for her."

The doctor returned, saying: "Her heart is a bit troublesome. She'll get better. Naturally she is a little depressed."

He put a sealed envelope in Shad's hands.

"Therein is the photograph of the man who killed Oscar Perry. Please give it to your chief and tell him how we came by it. I think that when he looks at this photograph he will know how it all came about. If not I can tell him."

They got into the buckboard and drove away. Soon after they set out Shad remarked:

"I had waited a long time in the darkness when I heard Miss Spenlow's clock strike eleven. A little later I heard a team cross the bridge. I knew that it had come from Ashfield. It stopped somewhere near. Probably in the shed at Smithers' store. I said to myself 'There is Royce.' In a little while they walked into the trap."

"A curious kind of a man!" the doctor exclaimed. "He is ill this morning and has sent for me."

"I wonder how he learned that the girl was at Miss Spenlow's."

"How could every one help learning it with dear Miss Spenlow's tongue as limber as it is?"

They rode on in silence. Shad was just in time

for his train. Near the depot in Canton a little before twelve o'clock he met Ruth Blake. He was on his way to the office.

"You are going wrong," she said.

"How so?"

"Why, because you are to eat luncheon with mother and me. Mother wants to have a talk with you. Come on."

"I have got to see your father."

"He will not get here until seven o'clock to-night. He's been to Chicago."

"But I want to go to my room and change my linen and put on my very best suit of clothes."

"Why all that fussing?"

"I must be dressed like a gentleman. If it was any other girl I wouldn't care."

Ruth blushed. "That's a pretty joke," she answered, looking into his eyes. "Hurry and we'll wait for you."

CHAPTER XIX

THE TRUTH CRUSHES ITS ENEMY

SHERIDAN MORRYSON, now a distinguished lawyer, has written in a volume of reminiscences, not to be released for publication until he has been lying ten years in his grave, that a boy ought to be careful in making the memories that are to go with him up the road.

He has given the historian a limited right of quoting from this record of his early life.

He writes:

I see mostly darkness when I look back upon my young boyhood. It was the darkness of ignorance and oppression with which I could not be content. But as I look a light falls upon my way. It came from gentle friendly faces. Mostly it was the light that shone out of the big, honest, blue eyes of a young girl. I began to feel the stir of a new life in me. In a little time the restless, daring, adventurous human being that I am was born. He knew his way. No task was too great for him. He had

a strange faith in his heart that no undertaking was beyond his strength. If it was an illusion it was worth having.

I knew mean and sordid people. These I have almost forgotten. But I do not forget or underestimate the kindly help of Mrs. Smithers, in spite of her narrowness, or the gentle severity of Betsy Spenlow, or the great heart of Bumpy Brown. Especially I remember the keen intellect and fatherly counsel of the beloved doctor and the generosity of Mr. Converse and of Colonel and Mrs. Blake. Above all these forces that have helped to make me the man I am is that light which, long ago, shone upon me out of a girl's eyes.

I was a romantic young knight of the age of chivalry when, that day in December, elated by my success in Amity Dam I came to Colonel Blake's house. I sat down at the table with Ruth and her mother. Cautiously I tried to ease the fulness of my heart.

"Forgive me if I look at you too much," I said to the beautiful girl. "It is winter. There are no flowers. The trees are bare and my eyes long for something good to look at."

Mrs. Blake smiled, saying: "I suggest that you turn your eyes on that portrait of a lovely lady looking down at you from the wall."

"She is very grand but her eyes tell me no secret. Her silent lips do not speak to me. My heart beats no faster when I look at *her*."

These things I tell so that those who read may know that I had an active imagination and a spirit not quite fitted to my time. Extravagance in dress and speech was the key-note of my youth. The ladies liked me. Some men did not. Those who said that

I was a born liar have never understood me. They will not understand me now when I say that there is no one so uninteresting as a born truth teller whose veracity has the precision of mathematics. Mrs. Blake knew my heart. She faced me about with these words.

"Dear boy, I know that you mean what you say but you are on forbidden ground. Did I not warn you to keep off the grass?"

She was smiling. My ardor had amused her.

"True! But when you gave me that warning you thought that I was a child. Since then Colonel Blake has told me that I have done the work of a man. He does not know it, but I have helped to solve the mystery which has baffled us so long. I have the evidence in my pocket. I have come to present it to him."

She took my hand in hers—a gentle motherly gesture. She said:

"You are a boy of a thousand—brave, thoughtful, keen-minded—a gentleman. I am proud of you. But you are only a boy in years, even if you are a man in accomplishment. You must be patient and wait a while before you can be engaged to marry."

"I can wait but the thought of it is like a knife in my heart. I shall have to go away where I can not see her. When I take her hand in mine, when I look into her eyes, my heart is telling her of my love. I should think that I might as well say it with my tongue. Why not?"

I wonder not that she laughed.

"I think that you are a born pleader," she answered. "The judge decides against you, but you can take your case to a higher court. Why do you not appeal to the colonel?"

Ruth had been silent but amused by these pro-

ceedings. I turned to her and asked: "Have I your permission to appeal?"

I think that she never looked so beautiful as when she turned to me and answered quite seriously: "Of course we'll appeal. Mother knows how to bribe him."

"I shall be scared. I know what he will do. He will remind me of the brass cannon and tell me that he uses it to shoot at young fellows who want to marry his daughter."

Then Mrs. Blake offered a suggestion which betrayed her sympathy. It was this:

"You will say that you are not the kind of man who finds discouragement at the cannon's mouth."

I arose and went to her side and kissed her. I knew that my case was more than half won.

This much is taken directly from the memoirs of the accomplished lawyer and statesman. It accurately reflects the romantic fervor of his temperament, the forces that lifted him out of the slough of his boyhood and started him on his triumphant way, the pride he took in the approval of the friends who had done so much for him. The illuminating passage should be associated with the query which ends his review of an unusual and most happy career. It is:

"How, in any land save this, could a boy, born as I was and bound for many years to a life of hard conditions, have won the friends, the peace, the plenty that have long been mine?"

Colonel Blake returned that evening from his journey in the West, bringing good news. He said:

"Algyre has been convicted. I have in my pocket a sworn confession of his part in the crime at Amity Dam. The doctor's theory was correct. The plan was Algyre's. He planted the revolver and the cartridges on Bumpy Brown. He was to get a certain sum of money. He got only half of it."

"Did you learn who paid him?" Shad asked.

"Yes. The name I am not quite ready to disclose. You and I must go to-morrow and make a careful survey of the premises of Robert Royce. Within twenty-four hours I think that we shall have our man in jail. Meanwhile we must keep still and step softly."

"I have some news for *you,*" Shad began. "We are at the end of the mystery."

"If the ladies will excuse us we will go up to my study on the top floor," said Colonel Blake.

They climbed two flights of stairs and when they were seated by a cheerful fire, Shad told of the doctor's strategy with the unfortunate girl and of the taking of the photograph, with the help of magnesium and powder, at night. He recited the dialogue that he had overheard. He presented the sealed envelope to his friend, saying:

"There is the photograph. I have not seen it. The doctor says that it shows the murderer. He is sure of that."

Colonel Blake broke the seal of the envelope and looked at the photograph.

"God!" he exclaimed as he put it back in the envelope.

He walked up and down thoughtfully, a serious look in his face. He resumed his seat.

"This is important," he said. "The talk you overheard and the photograph are the last links in the chain. It's a remarkable story, and there's a great hero in it."

The boy restrained his curiosity in the moment of silence that followed. It was broken by the colonel who said:

"My boy, in this whole matter you have rendered me a great service. It has been the work of a man and a brave man at heart. My rule is to keep decisive evidence to myself until the one it affects is under arrest, but I think that you are entitled to see that photograph if you wish to."

"I bow to your judgment, sir. I can wait."

"Well, you will not have long to wait. How did you get on with Blackstone?"

This was the very query that Shad had hoped to

hear. He took from his pocket the little essay that he had written on The Foundations of the Common Law. The colonel read it carefully.

"Again you have surprised me," he said. "It is excellent. I don't mean to say that it is above criticism, but your ideas are well expressed and your judgment of the value of the factors is singularly mature. It is like that of a man."

Shad was quick to take his cue. He said, "Colonel Blake, this compliment is very welcome. You told me once that I was brave. Well, I am going to be braver now than I have ever been."

The colonel turned toward the boy, whose face was red with embarrassment. He asked:

"Shad, what is it?"

"I am in love with your daughter. Some time I want to marry her if she will have me. I want to ask her to wait for me until I am old enough. If I have done anything worth doing, it is because I loved her and wanted to win her admiration."

The colonel laughed. "My boy, I know how you feel," he said. "It's a terribly serious feeling. It's like the measles. Every boy gets it and gets over it. You'll be better soon."

"It's awful to be only eighteen when people tell you that you can work like a man and be as brave

as a man, but nobody will believe that you can love like a man. Your opinions may be respectable but your love is a joke. Older men try to comfort you by saying that you'll get over it. I would as soon think of losing my head and getting over it."

"Boy, you know your case very well, and as usual you surprise me with your cleverness. I do not take it lightly. I can only say now that the court reserves its decision. At present let us confine our thought to the main issue. I am weary with much travel and must have rest. I'll go to bed and you go to your lodgings. To-morrow will be a busy day for both of us. I shall get a good team in the morning and call for you at eight o'clock."

The colonel went below stairs with the boy.

"Just say good night to the ladies and go home and get a good long sleep. Let your case stand where it is. When the evidence is all in I'll review it and render a decision."

Next morning Shad drove to Ashfield with Colonel Blake and the sheriff. They stabled their horses. The colonel asked Shad to telephone to Doctor Gorse and learn if he had any news to report.

The doctor answered: "Tell your chief that I must see him this morning, and that I will meet him at the Westminster Hotel within the hour."

They waited in the hotel office until the doctor arrived. He went into the writing-room with Colonel Blake where they sat down alone together. Their conference was brief. They had been together not more than five minutes when they returned. The doctor, calm, grave and polite, as always, bade them good morning and went away.

The colonel, the sheriff and the boy proceeded to the shop of Robert Royce. The young man was alone, the hour being early. The colonel addressed him in a serious tone.

"Royce, the time has come when I must have a frank talk with you," he said. "You will save yourself embarrassment if you lock your door and draw the shades. There can be no interruption of these proceedings."

Royce changed color. In a frightened voice he inquired, "What has happened?"

"I may have to arrest you. I have evidence enough to make you a lot of trouble. Whether you go to jail or not will depend on how you answer certain questions that I shall put to you. If you lie to me you shall suffer for it. What I want from you is the truth and the whole truth. I warn you not to conceal any part of it. Don't make a mistake and try to fool me. It won't work."

The sheriff had written on a sheet of paper. "Not open this morning." He hung it on the outer knob and locked the door. Royce, as white as the thin cover of snow that lay on the ground outside, turned up the lights and drew the window-shades.

"What have I done?" Royce asked.

"That's exactly what I want to know," Blake answered. "You are in a critical position. I take it that you do not want to be tried for murder or for complicity in murder."

"Murder!" Royce exclaimed.

"Yes. You can not prove an alibi. Moreover you had a motive as the only heir of your mother. You were intimate with the crook Algyre who has made a confession of his part in the killing of Oscar Perry and the attempt to put it on Bumpy Brown."

Royce had risen to his feet with a distressful countenance.

"My God, sir!" he exclaimed. "I have been a fool but I had nothing to do with that crime. What can I tell you?"

Blake demanded: "Tell me all that you know about the girl Carrie Brown."

Royce, a tall, spare, good-looking man of about thirty with gray eyes and thick, wavy dark hair, sat a moment in silence.

"That's like prodding me with a hot iron," he began. "But I'll tell you. Everything I know I'll tell you. She is a daughter of old Bumpy Brown. She came on to live with her father nearly two years ago. I was a friend of the old man. He lived in town and was drinking hard those days. She couldn't be happy with him and he was in no shape to take care of her. I fell in love with that girl."

Royce stopped. He leaned forward, his face in his hands. When he spoke again his voice showed signs of emotion.

"I never knew what it meant to be in love until I saw her," he went on. "My uncle gave her a job in his shop in Malone. The work was hard. She didn't like it. She was not very well. I got her a place in the store in South Bolton. It was a healthy country. She liked it. I went to see her once a week. I took her out riding."

Royce paused again. Colonel Blake asked: "Were you engaged to her?"

"Well, I had asked her to marry me. She had not promised to do it. I began to see that she did not care as much for me as I did for her. I would have gone through hell for her. By and by I learned that she was keeping company with another man. I couldn't find out who it was. I was told that she

would walk off in the woods alone Sunday evenings and meet him. I am sure that she was fond of him. He didn't love her as much as I did—that's certain."

Royce took out his handkerchief and wiped his eyes.

"He seduced her," the young man went on. "By and by she was in trouble. I had quit going to see her. Hubbard wrote me the truth and said that something would have to be done. The girl had no friends. I went up there. I couldn't stay away. I felt sorry. I loved her in spite of all she had done. She wanted to go to a midwife up in the woods. She wanted to hide the disgrace as much as possible. I took her there. She had a baby and came near dying. I stood by her. I took Doctor Gorse up there to see her. He saved her life."

Colonel Blake arose and went to Royce's side and took his hand, saying: "You have told the truth like a man. You see, I know the truth, but I wanted to hear it from you. I have only one more question to ask. When you missed your revolver, cartridges and overalls, had you no suspicion of the thief?"

"Algyre was in the shop the day of the murder. He told me that while I was out on an errand that day Bumpy Brown came in and went back to the

office. I made up my mind Bumpy had done the stealing."

Colonel Blake answered: "I am satisfied."

The sheriff was speaking of the admirable attitude of the young harness-maker toward the unfortunate girl when a loud rap shook the door. Immediately the rap was repeated.

"You may open the door and resume business," said Colonel Blake. "Pardon the interruption."

The door swung open revealing Cyrus Doolittle.

"Ask him to come in," said Blake. "He's just the man I want to see."

"I'm in a hurry," said Doolittle as he entered with a serious look in his face.

The colonel stepped behind him, closed the door, locked it and put the key in his pocket. He turned to the newcomer and said:

"Doolittle, if I were you I'd be in a hurry myself. I think that you've been in too much of a hurry all your life. The day has come when you must sit down and think it over."

Doolittle had turned pale. "I'm due in Griggsby in an hour," he said, looking at his watch. His dark eyes were troubled. He stroked his brown beard.

"You are overdue at the county-seat," Blake answered.

"What do you mean?"

As if making a random remark about the weather the colonel answered:

"I mean that you are going to jail this morning for the murder of Oscar Perry."

There was a little convulsive movement in the figure of Doolittle. In a second his muscles tightened. He stood erect. A look of indignation, on a background of death-like pallor, masked his face. He spoke like one whose mouth has been parched by fever, in a voice strangely unnatural. It was like a voice which has been long silenced by illness and become a clumsy servant.

"Me?" he demanded. "What do I know about the murder of Oscar Perry?"

Blake answered calmly: "Sit down, Doolittle. Don't try to make me believe that you've lost your memory. Why are you so excited? Pull yourself together and sit down and listen. You have memories that are like rats in your soul. They breed and gnaw as if they were trying to ruin the place. The truth is your remedy. Sit down."

Doolittle slumped into a chair. He clasped his fingers around one knee and sat with his chin upon his breast, breathing deeply as he looked at Blake.

The colonel seemed to be touched with a sense of

pity. He spoke in a gentle tone. "For years I have been your friend. I am still your friend. I know your story from beginning to end. I know every detail in it. I am not lying to you. I have the proofs in my possession. Some time ago you fell in love with a pretty girl. You made her believe that your wife could not live long. You gave her money and dressed her handsomely. She was young and unwise. You won her affection. You began to dally with passion. It is the most dangerous game which honest people can play. You lost your mental and moral balance. You staggered. The old Cyrus Doolittle fell dead. You had seduced the girl. You were soon between the devil and the deep sea. Your good judgment and your sense of honor had been burned out of you by the fire of lust. You wrote a lot of nonsense in the girl's autograph album. I have it here. You said among other things:

" 'This, dear Carrie, is from one who hopes soon to be yours.' "

The unhappy man interrupted his tormentor.

"It's a lie!" he exclaimed in a woeful voice like that of a victim on the rack. Beads of perspiration were on his brow.

"I do not wonder that you deny it," the colonel went on. "Surely those words were never written

by my old friend, Cyrus Doolittle. He was a smart fellow. It was quite another man who committed that folly—a man blinded by his passion. He had resolved to possess himself of the girl as soon as possible. How was he to do it?

"The burning question was on your mind day and night. In desperation you made a plan. On the tenth of November you drove to Griggsby. You arrived in Ashfield soon after noon and put your horses in the stable of the Westminster Hotel. About four-thirty that afternoon you came to this shop. You told your stepson that you were ill and wished to lie down. He took you into the little office built against the side of the shop in the rear where there was a desk and a lounge. You told Royce to let you sleep and not to call you. Then you closed the door and locked it. A loaded revolver and some shells to fit it lay on the desk. You had often seen it lying there. You put Royce's rubbers in your coat pocket to disguise your tracks. You knew that you could wear them. You knew too that Bumpy Brown wore a pair of the same size. You took the revolver. You put on Royce's overalls. At five-twenty or thereabouts it was very dark. Royce had closed the shop and gone up-stairs where he lay reading a paper. You put the revolver in your

pocket, opened the window and climbed through it. You crossed the bridge going west with a package under your arm walking fast. The package contained a broad-brimmed hat which you had borrowed from Algyre. A man I know saw you. He has never mentioned the fact for fear that he might have been mistaken regarding one who has always been respected. You wore a cap on your head. You carried in your pocket the rubbers, the revolver and cartridges, a light-colored slouch hat and a colored handkerchief. It is likely that you stole the handkerchief that afternoon from Goldwin's counter.

"You hurried up the road in the darkness. You left the broad-brimmed hat at some point not far from the bridge in Amity Dam. You reached your home about seven. You covered your face with the handkerchief. You put on the light-colored slouch hat and the rubbers. You rapped at the door. Your son opened it. You had expected that your wife would be standing before you. It was her habit to open the door. She was the one you had come to kill. You were facing not her but your son. You had to see it through now. You couldn't turn back. You entered, limping like Bumpy Brown, the boy fleeing before you. You began to shoot. You wounded your wife. You came close to her. Your

weapon was pointed at her face. You did not shoot then. You were still pulling on the trigger. You did not know that you had to release the trigger to cock the weapon. Therefore your wife escaped. You had to kill her father to get away.

"Now the rats began to gnaw. They smelled blood. You fled in the darkness. You put on the broad-brimmed hat. You were seen at different points on the road hurrying through the darkness. You tucked the handkerchief and slouched hat into a wall-hole. Opposite Brown's Cove you met the crook Algyre. He had helped to make the plan. He took the revolver and cartridges from your hands. He crossed the river and planted them on Bumpy Brown. He was to get a thousand dollars for helping you. He got only half of it because you were afraid to draw so much money out of the bank at that time. I have Algyre's confession in my pocket.

"You went on. You hid the broad-brimmed hat in a hollow stump and covered it with rotten wood. You put a cap on your head. You reached the Ashfield Bridge about eight-thirty. You threw the rubbers and overalls into the west channel. You entered the open window of Royce's office. You unlocked the door and called him. He let you out of the front

entrance. You crossed the east channel on your way to the hotel. A little beyond the bridge a man told you of the crime which had been committed at your house. You hurried to the stable and got your horses. You told different men around you that Bumpy Brown must have done the shooting—that you had put him off your place once and that he had sworn to get even. You drove rapidly up the road.

"Now, when you got home you did not drop the reins and run to find your stricken wife as an honest man would have done. You went straight to the stable to see that the colts were properly cared for. That one circumstance was like a mill-stone tied to your neck. It set a man thinking in your village, and his thinking has helped me to surround you with a chain of evidence that no power can break. When you saw your danger you tried to kill this boy and destroy certain links in his possession. You failed, and your failure pushed you a mile nearer hell. You were getting close to the red gates. The deep-laid, cunning plot against Bumpy Brown crumbled.

"You lived in a growing, blistering heat in that house of mourning with your good wife and son whose faith in you must have been like a crown of thorns. But the worst was to come. Here was the

girl who must have been nearer to you than all else. Home and son and wife and honor and good-repute were as chaff compared to her. She was in sore trouble yet you dared not lift a hand to help her. My God! What a thumbscrew that must have been!"

Doolittle was trembling. His mouth was open. He covered his face with his hands. Dumb with remorse and astonishment he was an abject and wretched figure.

"My story is near its end," the colonel went on. "When the girl was at Betsy Spenlow's with her child you went by night to comfort and reassure her. When you were with her in the spruce thicket a witness of mine heard you say to her that you would kill any one who came between you and her and that you would take her to Australia."

These words came in a hoarse whisper from the lips of the murderer: "It's a lie."

"No, it isn't. That instant we took a photograph of you and the girl. Here it is. Do you want to see it?"

The query was scarcely spoken when Doolittle pitched forward out of his chair. He lay sprawled, face downward on the floor, a limp, quivering, helpless, shrunken mass of ruined manhood.

CHAPTER XX

SHAD'S APPEAL TO A HIGHER COURT

DOOLITTLE recovered from his fainting fit. He did not confess as the colonel hoped he would do. The sheriff took him to the county jail that day. Colonel Blake and Shad went to the hotel for dinner and waited for the evening train. As they were sitting together in their room the colonel said:

"To-morrow is Christmas. Bumpy Brown and your friend Bony are coming down to spend the day with us. Do you realize how old Bumpy has been growing? He's a whale of a man."

The colonel lighted his cigar and smoked a moment. In the silence Shad wondered what was behind the words of his chief.

"These are the facts," Blake began. "Bumpy had learned that Doolittle—a married man—was making love to his daughter. He warned her against him. Then he warned his daughter's seducer and

probably in rather hot language. Doolittle pushed him off his place. Bumpy may in his anger have sworn to get even. After that whenever he was in his cups he damned Cy Doolittle. When he was indicted for murder and his life was in peril he must have suspected the truth that Doolittle had tried to get rid of his wife so that he could have Carrie. But old Bumpy held his peace. Why? Not even to save his life would he bring discredit on his daughter. To him death was better than shame. I doubt if in all the records of human action we may find a nobler sense of chivalry. It is curious that this shabby old tinker, often tipsying about the countryside, should now have us all sitting humbly at his feet. Of course he wanted the girl to marry Royce. Now, Royce is an honest but rather stupid fellow—a good deal of a dunce, I would say. I don't wonder that the girl wouldn't have him. Doolittle and Algyre made a tool of him in one way and another—notably in buying the rubbers, in building up the alibi of the guilty man and in misleading the detectives. I have never thought that his brain could create the mystery we have had to solve."

That Christmas Day at Colonel Blake's house was never forgotten by those who had a part in it.

The reward of five thousand dollars was distributed according to the plan of Shad and his chief.

To Bumpy Brown the income on two thousand five hundred dollars for life.

To Bony a sum sufficient for one year's board and schooling.

To Shad a certificate of deposit for the balance.

Bumpy cooked the oysters and the turkey and by request prepared the mashed potatoes with unlimited allowances of cream and butter. Then the cook was called to the table. He said:

"No, sir, by Jeedix, I'm too scared an' nervous to take a place in the front ranks. Besides I'm liable to bust out a-cryin' any minute—you've been so good to me. I'm goin' to keep close to the cellar door so I can retreat if I have to. I suppose I'll get used to bein' rich an' happy, but you'll have to give me a little time."

Bony said that Miss Spenlow had "mellered up" a good deal—that she was not so anxious to keep him from being ruined.

She went riding with the doctor now and then on condition that he would drive very slowly. She worried much about the doctor because he drank beer which would soon or late, she felt sure, undermine his morals and his constitution.

Bumpy was finally induced to come and drink his coffee with them. Colonel Blake arose and with characteristic humor reviewed the career of Shad Morryson. He told of the adventures at Center Pond and Morristown and introduced him as an expert detective. He was curious to see what the boy would say.

It was then that Sheridan Morryson made the little speech now quoted from his memoirs:

Colonel and Mrs. Blake: The little things I have done are partly due to your faith in a homeless lad and to your interest in his welfare. For all that I thank you. I must also thank Bony for his help and friendship. I do not forget the friendship, the kindness and the good heart of Mr. Brown. I may know handsomer men, but I shall never know a better man. There is one whose name you know to whom I am more indebted than to all others. That is a debt which I can only pay, which I shall gladly pay, with my life and my devotion if I am allowed to do so. I hope that I am not breaking the rules of the court in saying this much. I fear that I am like a bee that has been forbidden to trespass in a flowery meadow."

The colonel laughed. Then he turned to Mrs. Blake and said: "Mother, this boy is not like other boys of his age. He's really quite a man. If he and Ruth want to be engaged I suppose that we may as well take down the trespass sign."

"Bees can't read anyhow," the gentle lady answered with a smile. "They would better part, if they have to, before they are married than after they are."

Shad went to Ruth's side. They embraced and kissed each other. A gale of merry laughter had arisen. In the midst of it Colonel and Mrs. Blake and Bumpy and Bony came and embraced the happy youngsters.

Again a scrap from the memoirs:

Yes, it was unusual. I say only that it was good for us. We were in the same school and college until we were twenty-two. Our love filled the years with happiness and inspiration and mutual understanding. We helped each other. We knew each other. We had learned the gentle art of keeping step. We were in no danger of falling out when we were married the day after our graduation—a trouble that comes too often of slight acquaintance. Bumpy Brown came with his parrot and a handsome gift of money. Robert Royce and his wife Carrie, and Bony, then an able law clerk, and Betsy Spenlow and Doctor Gorse and Mr. and Mrs. Smithers were at the wedding. We were a famous pair and people came from far and wide to greet us.

For twenty-five years we have lived and wrought together. Time has been kind to us. There

is still gold in her hair and the glow of the corn flower in her eyes and the tint of roses in her cheeks. I—well, I am still a lover. Have we not seen enough of the peril of straying to keep us in the straight way?

FINIS

LINCOLN—IN THE MEMO

By IRVING BACHELLER.

STRANGE things are in this homely face and form—
A light mysterious, and voices. Like a plucked harp string is each shaping line,
So that I hear the cold stone singing of a righteous power that shook the world.
The sad eyes, the wrinkled brow, the unlovely mouth, the careless hair and garb!
Why are they so fair and beautiful? They remind me of the strength of the hills,
Of eyes that saw through darkness, of lips ennobled by undying words, of helping hands,
Of ears that heard the prayer of the humble, of feet that bore good tidings.
Vicissitudes as numberless as shifting sands flit by me—shadows out of history.
Perils in the wild, the great fear, heart-breaking loneliness and Death in the cabin.
When these things smite the faces of the young, who shall wash away the scars?
With want at the door, these hands had nursed the sick and swung the axe that fed the mouth of hunger,
And, spent with weariness, the wistful heart of youth found rest and inspiration in old books.
Soul-reaching shadows of failure, bitter loss and disappointment fell upon him.
Yet could he purge his heart of them with laughter, the while his eyes were sad,

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Men of the scattered races with the tongue and spirit of centuries long passed.

Fugitive from vile Oppression, seeking gold and finding it, but mostly in the hearts of their children.

He knew gamblers, drunkards, fighters, harlots, prophets, rich and learned men.

The great, the small and those between them and those beneath them—

The slave, the Indian, the thief, the beggar, the evil-hearted, and was patient with all.

He knew folly and the scorn of petty pride, and smiled as one amused by lovers' perjuries.

At last the President! Humility greater than his power! Stern rectitude that crushed his happiness!

The woe of war! Immortal words of charity! The day's end! The weary reaper coming from the field!

Then fell this calm as silent as the gleam of stars, as eloquent of things unknown, of everlasting mystery.

This look, the likeness of his soul, that tells of judgment sure and merciful as God's.

Such thy harvest field, O friend of man! And man hath made thee Captain of the nations.

So thy heart was filled until it spake from these forgiving lips as none, save One, hath spoken,

And long from many thrones of silence it shall speak.

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